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BROTHER LUTHER

BROTHER LUTHER

by

WALTER VON MOLO

President of the German Academy of Letters

Translated by ERIC SUTTON



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CHAPTER I

ON the morning of a soft spring day, more than fifteen centuries after Christ's crucifixion in a far-off eastern land, all was tumult and excitement in the ancient city of Worms.

Above, the clear distant blue: below, a tumbled mass of red and gray gables and turrets rising sharply to the sky, and looking as though huddled in a basket as they towered above the encirclement of pot-bellied walls.

From the green and undulating lands about the city rose the vineyards, bright and soaked in sunlight, with their clipped vines on the bright tall poles; the waters of the Rhine glittered and flashed with the reflection of the gold crosses on the countless church towers like a sheet of moonlight, sprinkled with stars sparkling in the light of day.

Calmly the populous forest of chimneys sent their smoke up to heaven; the goodwives of Worms were cooking the midday meal. But never had so many hissing stewpans overflowed at the same time in one town before. Again and yet again the goodwives swarmed to the open windows as though they had themselves been bubbles in a gigantic caldron. And there, as if the air without had been the lid that held them down, they stayed, leaning far out over the window sills. They peered down into the narrow shaft-like

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alleys, along which in ever-increasing numbers moved the armed militia of the city, in the red and white colors of Worms, with solemn bearded faces and much strenuous and resounding beating of drums.

"They are barring the side streets with chains," a voice shouted up to the women from the depths below, "and the city cannon has been mounted." Through the lovely, solemn, many-toned peals from the church towers could be heard the sound of trumpets; it burst forth defiantly on the market places, calling the knights and princes to the jousts.

The whole city was a surge of motley confusion and movement, in and out, and to and fro.

"Surely another king must be coming to attend the Diet," cried the voice of the master candlestick-maker's good lady to a gossip opposite across the narrow abyss that was the street. "Look, here come the lords riding out to meet him."

Their great white coifs which they pushed through the small narrow window openings nearly fell off their heads into the mud below, as they observed with tense trepidation the alderman at the corner, in his dark official robes, solemnly kindling the slow match for the master gunner, who accepted it with a haughty obeisance, and held it near the touchhole of his thunder-cannon that loomed up beside him like a tame toad with open jaws, sheathed in iron, malignant and eager for destruction.

The clattering cavalcade of gentlemen, who came riding closely packed together at a walk down the

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street, might well have been two hundred in number. All were clad in smooth hard iron, all were armed with daggers and swords, many had closed the visors of their plumed helmets, as though the French, or some enemy bishop or lord, lay before the city, and they were riding forth to do battle. Even those who wore a simple cap or large hat stared before them with a set and menacing air.

The bells ceased their metallic and melodious clangor, and in an instant all was so still that the rattle of the horses' hoofs on the uneven pavement rang out with strange distinctness.

The column of horsemen passed, and disappeared, swaying in their saddles, in the direction of the Mainz city gate.

The passers-by, who had huddled against the wooden and stone walls of the houses while the great sleek bodies of the horses with their terrifying clatter of hoofs moved past, turned once more into creatures of agitated life and movement. A fat monk in a brown cowl made many vigorous signs of the cross behind the vanished horsemen, as though they had been in the pay of the Devil. Then he picked up his skirts, exposing his massive legs, and turned and ran like a broad-beamed, startled, cackling hen through the puddles and garbage in the streets to the bishop's palace in which the young Emperor was residing. A few men also turned and followed the monk. He disappeared like an angry bull; his cowl bellied out behind him in the wind as he ran breathlessly into the nearest refuge, a

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tottering, poverty-stricken little house that only respect for the rich and beautifully painted houses round it prevented from tumbling down. The fat monk rushed at the steep and rickety wooden stairway and clambered up it. Panting, he tore open a crooked door. A half-starved, pitiable human object, clad only in a shirt, stood before him.

"Is the august Father, the holy Legate from Rome, within?" gasped the monk.

The poor creature who was engaged in sewing another patch on the collection of patches that he called his hose, threw them and the needle aside and fell on his knees before the monk and said devoutly, "Praised be Jesus Christ."

"Where is Herr Aleander?"

"Hush, Father," whispered the old man, as though God himself were in the house, laying a finger on his mouth, "do not disturb him. His Lordship is holding converse with the saints." He succeeded in clutching hold of the monk's plump hand and kissed it with hysterical fervor, and smiled blissfully as though the kingdom of heaven were not far off. "Is it not true, holy Father—every Christian need not burn in Purgatory?"

The monk looked undecidedly at the door, behind which he could hear the voice of his superior from Rome. But the old man would not be put off.

"Tell me, holy Brother, for it troubles me sorely, are the flames in Purgatory just as hot as those in hell? Must every departed spirit go to Purgatory?"

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"Every one that does not pay the penance that is due."

"Holy Mother! Have the servants of Beelzebub no day of rest? Do they keep their pincers hot day and night, year in and year out?"

"They'll nip your behind every day and night," answered the monk, "if you don't confess to me whether any one from the Saxon Court is with the Legate."

"Tell me, in the name of heaven," cried the terrified old man, almost screaming, though he relapsed into a whisper as the monk, in a fury, struck him on the mouth, "tell me, in heaven's name," he murmured, "how can a man escape Purgatory? We hear so many tales since all these lords from all the world have been assembled here."

The fat monk had better hearing than his half-starved companion. He made up his mind that the Papal Legate was not talking with a messenger from heaven behind that door. A Roman Legate would not speak so angrily to a messenger from heaven, since every inhabitant of heaven would be bound to absolute obedience to an emissary of the Pope. The monk decided to announce his presence by speaking in a loud voice. With his hands folded across his fat paunch, his round and shining pate bent unctuously over the poor creature kneeling before him, who looked up at him as devoutly as though he had appeared from heaven, he began to bellow out:

"The good and faithful servant that would escape Purgatory must fast five, seven, or more years on bread

and water, or he must go into exile for a year, and make pilgrimages to many holy places, and there give rich offerings and tribute to the Holy Father of the Christian world. But if you would make yourself secure, my son—child of our Holy Church, that alone can make us blessed—buy yourself an indulgence for your life.”

“May Christ in His mercy take pity on me. I have not the ducats to buy such holy wares!”

Bent forward, so that the rolls of fat on his fleshy neck were drawn smooth, the monk replied reprovingly, fixing him with his sodden, fishy eye. “If you make no offering to our Holy Father, then his Holy Church can show no favor to you; she cannot pardon your original sin and you must go to Purgatory.”

“But I will not; I’m afraid!” cried the old man, beside himself with despair and swaying to and fro as he spoke. “I can’t get it out of my head—that new picture in the cathedral with the yellow and red flames and all the brown devils with long hair. I sweat floods at night—I always see that dreadful picture that I have to pray to.”

“Then buy yourself a small indulgence which will give you peace for a few years—that will be cheaper.”

“But, holy Father, I cannot raise the price of even the smallest one.”

“Dear son,” boomed the monk, “in our Holy Church is provision made for all poor people. In every place, even in this heathen city, are branches of the indulgence

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agency of our papal banking house. Go to the Brothers of the Poor and get an advance to pay for your little indulgence."

"But is God's favor not to be had for nothing?" asked the pitiable creature. "I hear many people say so now."

"God damn you for an heretical hog," cried the monk, and hastily untied the cord from his unwieldy middle, while the other knelt motionless with folded hands and then fell convulsively on to his side, shrieked and hid his face. With long swinging strokes the monk began to belabor the unprotected hindquarters of the old man, who could not quite cover all his nakedness. The old creature screamed with terror, tried to hide himself in a corner and cover himself with his raised hands. "You shall be damned, you heretical dog. Heaven is forever shut against you."

The old man lay sobbing and whining on the ground. The monk stood up and gazed at his victim with a look of angry satisfaction; then, breathing heavily, he put on his girdle again. The voice near-by fell into silence, the monk turned quickly with an air of cringing obsequiousness, the door opened, and the Papal Legate stood before him.

He wore the violet robes of a high ecclesiastic, and a heavy gold cross on a handsome gold chain in the center of his broad chest.

The Pope's representative was prematurely old as the result of too violent study and too hearty a participation in the life of this world; and this filled him

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with a malevolent hatred of his fellows. He looked like a lean devil in human array.

The old man, with many groans, raised his bloodshot tear-stained eyes from the floor, clapped his hands to his smarting hindquarters, and whimpered out, "I didn't mean . . . to say . . . anything . . . wrong."

The monk sank on his knees and, with bent head and folded hands, awaited his superior's blessing.

"What is the matter, dear Brother?" asked the Nuncio.

"The pig is full of Lutheran heresies, most holy lord."

Like a beaten dog the old man crawled across the dirty cracked floor of his wretched room to where Aleander stood. He tried to kiss his shoes in humble supplication, but the shoes moved aside and eluded him. Rome's pardon was not to be had so easily.

"Get up."

The old man fell upon his face once more and lay motionless.

The expression in Aleander's dark eyes was undecided and thoughtful. His gaze wandered uncertainly from the pitiable object at his feet to the fat monk.

"Most holy lord, he will not pay for the holy indulgence of our most Holy Father at Rome, because the Saxon heretic has proclaimed that God's favor may be had by all men for nothing."

The Nuncio looked down at this sheep of his flock outstretched upon the floor, as though he were meditating its slaughter; as though one of his slaves lay

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before him whose survival depended solely upon his caprice. In the extremity of terror, his face flat against the floor, the culprit lay still motionless on the filthy planking. Aleander reflected: this poor wretch was the only man who had offered him a lodging; if the old man died, or if he drove him from the community of the faithful, he might easily be ejected from this house. And the face of the Papal Envoy grew bright red with anger as he remembered the humiliations to which he had been continually exposed by these insolent and blasphemous Germans.

“Do you know, rebellious fool, that I can excommunicate you? And then you are doomed to hell. Shall I have the thumbscrews put on you? Would you like to hear your joints crack and creak on the torture bench? Shall I have your limbs twisted on the wheel; or have you burnt?”

“And the last sacraments,” added the monk, “will be denied you in the hour of your death.”

Aleander made a gesture of annoyance. The monk bowed in hasty acquiescence and was silent.

“But I am a servant of the Savior,” Aleander went on. “Christ, our Lord, gave us the precept of love. I shall pardon you.”

The monk’s swollen eyelids shot upwards in his amazement. His superior’s remark had shattered his utmost power of composure.

The old man did not yet dare to move. But he now lay quiet on his hands and knees; then he jerked himself half up and clutched the hem of Aleander’s robe

that hung down to his ankles. He kissed the cloth and caressed it lovingly and passed it over his dirty unshaven cheeks. Aleander looked across the old man—whose head swayed to and fro as he fumbled the ecclesiastic's garment, grunting in inarticulate ecstasy—at the monk; and the monk shuddered before that gaze. The Nuncio spoke in a threatening voice and a commanding tone which made him shrink as before a raised fist.

"It is God's pleasure, Brother, that you should go quickly to the Mainz gate and look after the poor people there. Honorable and devout gentlemen and burghers have begged me to tell them of persons in distress, so that they may take care of them and see that they do not go down to hell in the heretical air of this lost city. God has made it clear to me that you will find many in such danger by the Mainz gate."

The monk once more threw himself upon the floor and lay there in humiliation and understanding, as though lifeless in the presence of the representative of the almighty Pope.

"Rise, Brother in Christ," commanded Aleander, after time enough had elapsed for the humiliation of a humble monk; "bring me word quickly of the names of those that you find by the Mainz gate."

The fat monk got up heavily and stood, deeply contrite; he hung his head and said in a low and hesitating voice: "Many Saxon knights rode out of the town."

"Bring me swift news of all that happens before the Mainz gate."

"Praised be Jesus Christ, our Holy and revered Lord."

"Forever and ever, Amen."

Bent forward, with his eyes on the ground, his hands crossed in the wide sleeves of his habit, the monk disappeared into the dark tunnel of the stairway.

At last, in despairing supplication, the dim eyes of the human garbage that lay at Aleander's feet looked up into the face of his exalted lodger.

"Stand up; you knew not what you said."

The creature nodded in hurried acquiescence as though a spasm had seized his bald skull; he crawled to his feet, collected himself and stood up.

"You shall atone for it by henceforward watching my room day and night, and taking care that none shall enter your house that does not belong here or is not sent by me."

And the old man nodded many times and promised true and faithful service.

"Take your rosary, kneel down on the stairway and say Ave Marias until I go forth to his Majesty the Emperor."

"May the heavenly ones thank your Holiness," whispered the old man through his pallid, bitten lips, pulled his battered rosary out of a tattered woolen stocking that had once been white and hobbled through the outer door. He knelt down and, turning towards the uneven, lime-washed wall, began to move his lips and

murmur prayers. Aleander stood and listened for a while, and then he shut the doors; the old man was busy, he was somewhat deaf, and he certainly could hear nothing through two wooden doors. The Pope's envoy went back to his room that resembled nothing so much as a bird-cage hung out into empty space above the alley below.

"You know," he said haughtily, resuming his colloquy with a thick-set masculine object, looking like a human bull—a great lump of raw flesh, who stood before him and once more glared at him uneasily, "the Dominicans saved your life when the executioner had already put your head upon the block. Your right hand has already been cut off—bear that in mind, dear Brother in Christ, and consider every word you say. The Imperial Provost brings a dozen like you every day to their death."

"Ask, my lord."

"Is your news true that the filthy heretic is on his way here?"

"Yes, you may hear it everywhere. The Saxons say he will arrive to-day. He was in Frankfurt yesterday."

Aleander's arms hung at his sides and he clenched his great fists; his withered calves were drawn backwards in a kind of sudden cramp against his violet robe.

"Why don't those accursed fellows of yours seize him?" Aleander's glance was like an executioner's ax ready to strike.

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"They were too late, most honored lord. They thought the potion at Erfurt would have sufficed. Indeed, he lay sick to death at Eisenach, but he did not get all the poison into his beastly stomach; they gave him some powerful medicine and he was let blood. I cannot help it if he is as strong as a stallion. When he was well again, my men would have got him, but he is always surrounded by knights, who search the forests before he rides through them. We can't get at him."

"You Germans do not know how to set about it. If he reaches here alive I hand you over to the executioner."

"My lord!" cried the one-handed man, as though he had been struck with a whip.

"See to it that he is at last put out of the way."

Coolly and quite unmoved by the terrified gasps of his hireling, Aleander placed his small cap on his scanty hair, looked himself up and down in the tall metal mirror that he had borrowed from his barber. All was in order.

"What are you waiting for?"

The murderer stood before him, gesticulating wildly with one arm, the ugly-healed handless stump of his other laid against his bull-like chest, and he swore to do his best; but he did not really believe he would succeed. Aleander did not pay him the slightest attention, and walked past him. When he reached the poor wretch on the stairway, who had started an interminable succession of Ave Marias, he said:

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"The Mother of God has now heard you; go into my room and clean it, and then say paternosters until I come back; and put your hose on."

"Yes, most holy lord," said the old man humbly.

The hired assassin, as he walked across the creaking floor-boards of the outer room, was of another opinion.

"The plague destroy this Italian dog."

The old man crossed himself in horror.

"Be not too humble," said the murderer meaningly, "or your house may get burnt down. His servants were turned out of doors again yesterday. Why did you give the beast a lodging?"

"The reverend Father wished to dwell with us because our dear Lord Jesus Christ was poor also and loved poor people."

"Oh! Did the brute say that? Does he pay you anything?"

The old man said "No" in a satisfied tone.

"Then you have no money to buy yourself out of Purgatory, you fool. The swine came to you because every one else had shown him the door. Watch the boy that brings him his food—strange tastes these Italian brutes have."

Shocked at this unchristian and gross suggestion, the old man hurriedly put on his tattered hose; and then with feeble, groping movements he began to clear up the room of his illustrious lodger.

He smoothed the coarse-fibered, dun-colored sheets over the dirty straw pallet; with many groans he car-

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ried the chamber pot to the window and, after the prescribed warning cry, poured the contents into the street.

Then he knelt down again, crossed himself devoutly and began to say paternosters.

CHAPTER II

OVER the bright sunlit city floated once again the broad, resonant, lovely clangor of the church bells. Before every altar Masses were said for the salvation of the living and the dead. In every church, by the power of the Roman priests, the Savior descended upon earth.

Aleander walked with head held high, as though he had nothing to do with mortal men, through the groups and little knots of people kneeling devoutly on the streets and squares. At every louder peal from on high they crossed themselves hurriedly on their foreheads and breasts.

"Ha!" cried a huge-limbed citizen, in sudden interruption of his devotions as he raised himself heavily and towered tall and menacing above the rows of prostrate nuns and monks, who lay motionless with their faces upon the ground. "Thou ravisher of boys! How long wilt thou molest our Emperor?"

Contemptuous and unmoved, Aleander held his head high. What concern had he with such a rabble? He did not hear them. The Church of Christ had already gone through many persecutions, her servants had often been insulted and martyred, but she had always won the victory.

Aleander walked as though his legs were as tall as

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the church towers, as though the human beings round him were little insignificant stones beneath his feet. Were they anything else? He saw the roofs and the square indented gables of the houses, and the spires; and the heaven above him, whose representative he was, and whose mysteries were known to him though they were hidden from all others. Beneath him crawled helpless, barbarous human vermin. They gave tongue like powerless dogs fast secured to their chains.

His thoughts turned to the other nations—France, Belgium and Italy. They were people of imagination and clear will: here the women turned away embarrassed if one offered them the refinements of love, and wept. The men were arrogant, clamorous dolts, quarrelsome, without pride, and usually drunk. The mighty Germany of old had become a dull, withered and powerless realm; Rome's stranglehold had gripped her throat. So they wanted to rebel? They would soon feel that grip grow tighter, and breathe no more.

When Aleander realized that he had now reached the broad staircase before the portal of the bishop's palace, he lowered his eyes. It was a mighty building, so splendid that surely no German architect could have brought it into being: what did the people of this land know of such matters?

Sunburnt and dazzling in their flashing steel breast-plates, Spanish gentlemen-at-arms stood on guard at the foot of the open staircase. They respectfully lowered their gayly decked halberds to the ground and kneeled. Aleander's hand swept through the air, he

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gave his blessing to the Emperor's bodyguard and hurried up the broad steps into the Imperial Palace.

Men in full armor, in priestly robes, and dark civil array, all manner of burghers, councilors, knights, princes and clerics, with whom the place was overflowing, bowed deeply before the representative of the Father of Christendom. Aleander again distributed his blessing with the expressionless movement of the hand that had long since hardened into an empty gesture. And in front of him, like a faithful dog, cap in hand, bent and half-turned towards him, ran the Emperor's doorkeeper.

The long echoing passages with their many doors were like the corridors in a great court of justice.

Round every door was a half-circle of excited suitors, and each group was continually agitated by persons entering in humility or emerging in anger. Everywhere could be heard the clink of gold pieces, changing hands secretly or for all to see. In such soil and such only could a seed grow among the imperial officials; whether it would bear fruit or not, God alone could tell.

The Envoy of the Ruler of the World strode contemptuously through the imperial countinghouse. How meanly, pitifully, and crudely all business here was conducted.

The doorkeeper stopped before a lofty portal of dark carved oak, and made a bow of leave-taking. Into his submissive eyes there flashed for an instant some-

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thing strange, something that suggested clenched fists that longed to strike.

"Praised be Jesus Christ, my Lord."

"May He bless you, my son."

A page with slim, handsome legs opened the door: when Aleander had come in he shot the bolt back noiselessly into its fastening. The Nuncio stood still.

Before him knelt a short, gracefully built Franciscan monk, sunk in prayer before a statue of the Mother of God which stood in the middle of this great brightly lit room; above was a ceiling painted with the figures of Greek gods and goddesses. When he heard Aleander's step he had flung himself on to the praying stool; it was to be hoped that the Pope's Envoy had not heard the shock of his knees against the wood. He felt the pain of it still. Before his eyes still passed the lively figures of the austere, gracefully moving women and girls beneath his windows. How modestly, and yet with what looks of passionate eagerness, they streamed past into the cathedral: and how their voluminous cloaks accentuated in some mysterious and charming way the forms of these bright-skinned women, and yet made them look so dignified.

Sunk as he was in prayer, completely severed from the world, after a while the slim monk's eyes moved. Utterly absorbed in his ecstasy his gaze wandered over Aleander and back again to the Mother of God. The Franciscan, plunged in his devotion, did not recognize the Nuncio, did not see him, did not even realize that there was some one in the room.

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"How marvelously he acts!" thought Aleander. He smiled an encouraging, friendly, and understanding smile. With what admirable deliberation the soul of the imperial confessor then came down from heaven, and how faithfully he portrayed its reawakening into material life after his complete estrangement from the world.

"I would not disturb you," said Aleander, in a brotherly tone, raising his hand with a gesture of deprecation.

The monk arose, dazed and melancholy, for God had once more given him over to mortality. A small, insignificant, brown-haired man, with a dark-skinned longish face and colorless eyes, almost devoid of expression, he had again to wander in the earthly vale of sorrow.

"Finish your prayers," repeated Aleander, in a grave and solicitous tone: "the representative of the Holy Father himself retires before the Divine Virgin in such a matter. Let me not disturb you at your devotions."

"I am praying to the Mother of all mercies that your work of exterminating idolatry may succeed. Now I am at your service."

Aleander bowed and genuflected as he passed before the image of the Virgin and then sat down comfortably in one of the upholstered chairs. He so turned his seat that the light from the high pointed window fell upon his back.

"You know, my dear friend, why I am here?" said

he smoothly, and tried to draw aside the veil over the other's eyes.

The imperial confessor still gazed entrancedly at the floor; he sat down near the Nuncio. He too turned his chair against the living light of the sun which rose higher and higher and shone more and more brightly into the room. In the half-darkness of his meager shadow the monk glanced for a moment at the Pope's Envoy: and he nodded as though to say:

"Begin, I am ready to take up my cross."

"The Saxon nobles have ridden out to meet him," said Aleander.

"And the followers of many princes—lay and spiritual, have joined them," added Glapion, in a monotonous, slightly singsong voice.

"We are reaping the fruit of the Emperor's shameful hesitation."

"And that is the fruit of the hesitation of our Holy Father in Rome," retorted Glapion, devoutly folding his small weak hands, which looked like pale surfaces without weight or substance.

"The Emperor is the servant of the Pope, like every Christian," returned Aleander. "Whoever loves Germany's Lord should bring the young man's conscience into that state of humility that he owes to Holy Church and to the Pope."

Glapion nodded in earnest acquiescence, and yet still with a slightly doubtful air.

"I can realize your difficulties and I know how your conscience must be tried," proceeded Aleander in a

gentle tone. "It must be a terrible distress to you that the Emperor has not even yet burnt this heretic whom the Holy Father has excommunicated."

"The Wittenberger would burn to-morrow," replied Glapion, with perfect composure, "if Rome would give up the French alliance against the Emperor."

Aleander controlled himself with difficulty; he itched to break out, and his breathing became audible like that of a prisoner striving to burst his bonds; he made a mighty effort to hide the fury that heaved within him. "It is, after all, intolerable," he said, "that a man who is bound to complete obedience to the Holy Father, and a Christian, too, should indulge in worldly defiance."

"I think I can best serve our Holy Father in Rome in this matter," replied Glapion, with dropped eyes, and without looking up at his ecclesiastical superior, "if I describe my imperial penitent in all my utterances as my master."

Aleander listened to the echo of the word; "describe" did Glapion say? "Describe in my utterances?" So it was only in his utterances that the confessor regarded the Emperor as his master? He only described him as such? This cleared the ground: each knew where the other stood. Aleander sat up.

"What does he whom you describe as your master, think of this excommunicated monk?" he asked.

"My imperial master's view can be gathered from his public statements, my lord," replied Glapion, with reserve.

"Thoughts and actions cannot always agree in this world; I ask what he thinks."

"If I were to reveal my penitent's thoughts, I should violate my duty as a confessor, who is bound to respect absolutely the secrets of confession."

Aleander's nose, long and bulbous like a turkey's gizzard, filled with blood; it grew dark, almost blue.

"Have you represented to your master that Rome's anathema has often fallen upon princes and emperors likewise, and has destroyed thrones and dominations? Such would be an abrupt end to the imperial office that your penitent has so lately assumed."

"I do not care to use threats to a young man who is still in the first intoxication of power: or should we rather say, my lord, a young man whom counselors and chancellors might easily make intoxicated with power. The whispers of irresponsible advisers might well produce the painful result of forcing the Emperor, in order to secure his position, unconditionally into the arms of a single nation."

Aleander was so taken aback that he stamped on the floor: to hide his agitation he assumed an attitude of deep reflection, staring fixedly down at the points of his long shoes: he raised himself a little in his chair, and looked them up and down. Was it possible that the Germans actually intended to win the game? Had the Saxons ridden out to meet the heretic with the Emperor's knowledge or even actually by his wish?

"The Germans have no money," answered Aleander, haughtily; "the Pope has all the money in the world."

"They say so, my lord," replied Glapion, cautiously, as though he were very carefully removing the bandage from a dangerous wound: "and I do not doubt it: but I have never seen gold flowing into the world from Rome."

Ah, that was it. Or was it an attack on the Roman system of bribery? But it was true, though Aleander might burst with rage and anger; the Pope was too stingy, he was not open-handed like earthly princes, he gave too little, he spent all his enormous revenues on himself alone, and on the royal state in which he lived. This heretic's affair called for the expenditure of much money: nothing could be achieved with the scanty resources that Rome had placed at their disposal.

"The Germans could easily come by a great deal of money," continued Glapion sweetly, and his every word quivered in the air before the other like the menacing point of a foil: "They are an industrious nation: if they refused to pay any taxes, tithes, tribute or religious bequests to Rome, they would grow to be very rich indeed."

Aleander was even more startled than before. Would they dare to do it? These, or something like them, were the heretic's ideas that had made Germany so obstinate; had they taken root in the Emperor as well?

"You said that almost like the rebellious monk himself, Herr Glapion."

"He who loves Rome must see her shortcomings in order to remove them. Not for nothing have our best

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men striven for centuries for a reformation of our Holy Church: she has long forgotten the essence of her being. She has grown hard and cruel: she rejects and turns abruptly away from all that the childlike, seeking heart of man could bring to her. If the hearts of the faithful did not lend some beauty to her stern commands, the Church of Rome would no longer exist. If every man who has longed for better things, for a return to spirituality and love, in place of subjection through fear, had not been excommunicated or burnt, or otherwise reduced by Rome to everlasting silence, then this German monk could never have arisen. That is the proof that I am right."

Aleander opened his eyes wider and wider: he felt as though the skin of his skull was cracking, but he was careful to avoid looking at the other: he was not yet strong enough to do so.

"It was a gross error," went on Glapion, gazing earnestly before him, and it seemed as though he, too, had been left alone and disillusioned in aspirations such as these: "It was a gross error not to have listened kindly to the Saxon monk and won his confidence—he is very able, and is rightly regarded as one of the first theologians in the world. Why was he not summoned to Rome and given Christian counsel—no one can deny that he means well—and why was he not made a bishop? Why was he not humored in small matters, in many of which he was right; why was not some attempt made to win him by kindness before he was condemned?"

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Glapion looked at Aleander's open-mouthed countenance.

"I have studied these Germans, my lord. They are childishly submissive if one shows them some compliance and consideration."

"We were on the point of silencing the blasphemer, but the old Emperor died, and we had to draw back until we knew that Luther's Elector would not become Emperor."

Glapion nodded, looking reflectively before him: "It could have been done had he not been a German."

Aleander did not understand. "Do you mean," he said quickly, "that the heretic can still be bought to-day?"

The Emperor's confessor smiled sadly down at his pale hands.

"You mean his teaching is now too well-known?" asked Aleander, leaning back in his seat with an air of guilty uneasiness.

"I do not know," said Glapion, avoiding the issue.

Aleander marked this opinion. If all else failed they must resort to bribery. He breathed more easily, but he was still pricked by a doubt: was Glapion saying all this because he himself wanted a bribe?

"Rome no longer sees the world as it is," continued the imperial confessor, as if he were addressing an invisible assemblage of all the dignitaries of the Roman Church: "How can our Church be universal, if she does not understand how to remain above all disputes and dilemmas? Only thus can she rule the earth. The

hopes of the House of Medici were absorbed in domestic intrigue and fought to establish their own Italian family instead of striving to establish the power of the Church over the whole earth. The German monk who has risen up against us is no common enemy, as will be clear to any one who reads his writings. They are very clever. The monk has recognized the breaches that we ourselves have made in our once impregnable fortress, and his appearance is the beginning of a movement that may bring that Roman fortress to ruin."

"Glapion!" cried Aleander, and he clenched his fists, his gaze wandering unsteadily up and down the now sun-flooded room.

"The Holy Father in Rome has committed dreadful errors," went on the Franciscan, "and he and the Curia alone are the cause of all the difficulties that now beset us. This is a very able man and Rome has not his equal: how could he be condemned and repudiated like some ordinary numskull in a monk's habit; did you think that would be the end of it? Luther could have given our Church back her ancient power and brought back joy to all the faithful."

"Are you jesting?"

Glapion, whose eyes slipped from Aleander's pincer-like gaze as though they had been oiled, turned them upon the latter for an instant. "I speak in complete seriousness and from a troubled heart."

"But does not the heretic want a German Church?"

"He who would rule the world, my lord, must know the inner dispositions of its peoples. Luther knows his

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own people, the Pope knows nothing of any people. The German wants what Christ wanted."

"Are you mad?"

"The Germans destroyed the Roman world-empire when there was still no Pope in Rome. I should be sorry, my lord, if another Roman world-power were destroyed by the German nation—and that is why I speak to you so candidly."

Aleander recovered some semblance of self-confidence.

"Is what you have been saying the opinion of the Emperor?"

"It is my opinion, and it comes more and more often into my mind. One must weigh all opinions until one knows which is the right one and what is the wisest thing to do."

"What does Luther want here, my dear friend?" said Aleander in a flattering tone, as affectionately as he could, for he saw the imperial confessor was in a melting mood to-day and could easily be swayed. "Why does he come here? He knows that his books have been burnt by the executioner and condemned in all the Emperor's patrimony, and that his followers are being persecuted and exterminated. I do not deny that the Devil has bestowed on him certain gifts of mind, but is he not intelligent enough to realize that he will meet his death here? That here, too, his doctrine will be destroyed? Why does he come here? What does he want?"

Glapion reflected that Aleander's question was not inapposite. It was folly for an excommunicated person

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to appear before the Imperial Diet. Glapion did not altogether understand Luther's coming nor his determination to fight, but he felt that there was more behind it than Aleander saw.

Glapion's face lost all movement: "What!" he suddenly thought. "Can there be a really good man in the Christian sense?" Was what he had just been saying (though later it seemed to him the merest hyperbole) actually true? There were such revolutions of feeling in Glapion that he had to provide himself with some protection against them: he threw his head back and smiled at the absurd thought that then came into his mind, as though to shake it off: forced abstinence had produced a sense of exaltation known to many shabby monks who, worn out by fasting, allowed themselves to be walled up, moaning ecstatically the while, despised their bodies and all things beautiful and gay, and prayed for death that they might see God. There was no German Jesus Christ. Did not learned men rightly dispute in secret whether Jesus Christ had ever lived—Christ on whom the only Church that could bring true happiness was founded and established?

"True, all is not yet lost," he began, in a clear, composed voice, which, however, changed and grew once more serious and perplexed as he remembered much that he had seen in the land of his Spanish penitent, who was now Emperor of the Germans. "These Germans see everything differently from us; they take life hard—here every word has weight. It is possible," Glapion went on, "though one hardly dares to think it,

that perhaps Luther takes everything in the Gospels as true?"

Aleander and Glapion both unconsciously bent forward, and there was an outspoken question in their eyes.

"The Lateran Council has indeed decided that the soul is immortal," said Glapion, turning his gaze inward once more, looked down, and again let his eyes cloud into vacancy, "but who of us believes it? This Luther believes it. I have been assured, my lord," said Glapion, briskly, and as though recovering from a sudden shock of fear, "that the beliefs of the Germans were lately considered by the Council. When they were still heathen they believed in an eternal and a better life. The Cardinal of Mainz indeed, himself a German, said that in all countries and in all towns in the last few centuries, the German mercenaries were for this reason the best soldiers in the world. The Germans are a very strange people."

Glapion was silent.

Aleander's eyes were dark, full of superstitious apprehension, like swampy pools by night, mirroring driven gusts of foul, putrefying leaves.

"You mean that the Germans will rebel against us?"

Glapion smiled: half his face expressed a pacifying negative, the other half was still tense with anxious musing.

"You do not see aright," he answered: "you are Italian, I am French: it is difficult for us to see through this grotesque German nation, but as far as my experience goes, incredible as this fact may sound, my lord,

it is true: the German does not strive for earthly power. No; for them it is of no importance, and therefore I have said and I say again—if the Germans sat down in Rome, then they would be seen to have the gift that our Pope has lost—the gift of ruling the world.”

Aleander wanted to laugh aloud, give the Franciscan the lie, and protest that he was not to be fooled like this; but a cold thrill stayed him, a foreboding fear of he knew not what, and he was silent.

“The German sword will not stir,” said Glapion with gloomy conviction: “The Germans are slavishly obedient—they hate disorder and revolt, but what they call their German soul—that is what is stirred, my lord.”

Aleander sat with his lips agape, he had ceased to understand a word of this.

“The heretic’s Elector is highly concerned about the arrival of his learned professor,” went on Glapion. “Some weeks ago we searched the saddlebags of a messenger who was riding to the Elector’s brother: we found a dispatch from the Saxon chancellor, in which he begged the monk most earnestly in the name of his master not to come here because they could not protect him in this place.”

Life and decision surged back into Aleander’s eyes. He felt firm ground under him once more. In his face was the old tense conviction; once more he knew the malignant, savage consciousness of victory, and he rose.

“Then there is nothing dangerous in all this stupid jubilation over this heretic’s journey to his death?” he said aloud, and he went on, to set his mind quite at rest:

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"You do not think he will raise a revolt of the peasants and knights against us."

Glapion remained seated: he saw his responsibility, and his veins seemed filled with lead. To him the whole affair looked different. In his mind glimmered a conviction that a spiritual revolution was more dangerous than one that meant drawn swords and bloodshed.

"If these stinking Germans are afraid, then the battle is won," said Aleander: he stared down in surprise at the fragile-looking Franciscan, who was still seated and looking thoughtfully before him. Aleander had a feeling of respect for the tenacity with which Glapion had pushed what he took to be a demand for a bribe. "I shall report to the Curia the services that you have already rendered to Christendom."

Aleander paused expectantly. The imperial confessor did not stir.

"You say you have never yet seen any money from Rome. The Pope's gratitude is great, dear friend, and will be greater if you continue to lead the young, inexperienced Emperor in the way he should go."

Glapion laid his hand on his heart and, still seated, bowed, with a rustle of his elegant habit which was made of the finest cloth. He looked up, and Aleander did not like what he saw in those eyes.

The small, pale Franciscan rose and said: "As the Emperor's confessor I have more power than all the cardinals and nuncios in the world. I need no money."

"But you told me," stuttered Aleander, swallowing

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like a man whose offer of love had been curtly refused, "that your sister's son was anxious for a post in the papal chancery. If you help us to get our way in this affair, your nephew need wait no longer. I swear it on the Holy Cross. Go to the Emperor, and get him to issue an edict against the heretic."

"I shall serve you better by taking you to Herr von Chièvres. The edict has long since been signed."

Aleander started back: he stood like a corpse that had forgotten to fall down.

"Yes, but Herr von Chièvres," and perhaps I, too, thought Glapion to himself with a sudden feeling of comforting contempt, "will not publish it."

He nodded cheerfully in response to Aleander's downcast look.

"Come with me, my lord," added the imperial confessor with revengeful sympathy, "your affair stands ill."

CHAPTER III

THE gray-haired Marquis von Chièvres, the Emperor's Grand Chamberlain and former tutor, was sitting at his writing table in an ill-humor. His sunken, bird-like head, with its plaster of white hairs, hung down in irritation over the rich, soft fur trimming of his voluminous court apparel in which the small emaciated figure was almost engulfed.

"I have no time for you now, my lord," complained the President of the Imperial Council in a querulous, ill-tempered voice: "there is news from Spain that demands my whole attention and must come before all other business."

Aleander's urgent expression remained stern and immovable. It had been a good move on the part of Rome to stir up revolt against the civil power in those lands where it became too overweening. Such potentates had usually to eat their words. The Roman bishops who led the Spanish revolts deserved to be canonized.

Chièvres' withered, bent figure did not move; he read Aleander's thoughts with ease. "Such encouraging news has come in from Spain," he said, looking before him, and felt with satisfaction how the Nuncio's heart and stomach contracted with every word he said. "Such encouraging news from my young imperial master, that

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we shall soon have a completely free hand against France."

Aleander turned his head quickly and threw a mistrustful and imperious glance at Glapion.

"Herr Marquis," said Glapion, "the Lord Nuncio desires but a few words with your Grace."

"I know, I know," answered Chièvres in a pompous tone, as if he were really as stupid and frivolous as he made himself out; "I know: the heretic is coming to make a solemn recantation before the Diet." Sure of his mark, he added venomously, "It is clear that a stable civil government in every country is most desirable for the Pope."

Aleander compressed his lips, though inwardly he was near an outburst: this was the method of blackmail—he began to recognize it. It was a prerogative of Rome, not of the civil power. Did the imperial party now want to turn this weapon against their opponents? The Emperor's former tutor proceeded calmly as though he had neither eyes nor ears.

"If the Pope would at last place the Spanish Inquisition in our hands, the Holy Father would spare himself much distress. The sight of Christians murdering each other in Spain must cause great sorrow to his kind, unselfish heart. And yet," Chièvres smiled resignedly with his yellowed face close to his writing board as though his interlocutor lurked in the wood to which he spoke—"I know the Holy Father will not give in until he finds he has achieved nothing in Spain by not doing so."

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Glapion looked down. The meaning of this was unmistakable.

"I have written to Rome," answered Aleander, quickly, in a dry voice that sounded ominous, "that in the matter of the Spanish Inquisition we must, for better or for worse, defer to the Emperor."

Chièvres nodded to Aleander with a friendly thankful air as though he meant to say "Excellent," but the latter then brought out his *quid pro quo*.

"Rome will give in as soon as the Emperor has shown himself the protector of the Holy See in Germany."

Chièvres sat motionless. Glapion said nothing, which annoyed Aleander. Was this a preconcerted plot? He would not be treated so. He must once more make clear to these gentlemen who they were.

"It is the young Emperor's sworn duty to obey us."

Chièvres turned slowly and deliberately like an old polar bear on a chain, and looked at the other.

"My dear young master is utterly determined," he said, "to give his life for the defense of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and of the Holy See."

"It is more important for the moment," said Aleander in a hectoring tone, "that the scoundrel from Wittenberg should be put into jail if he really dares to show himself here."

"Measures have been taken," said Chièvres soothingly, with unaltered indifference, "most adequate measures have been taken."

"They have not been taken," cried Aleander, and walked so abruptly to the writing table that Chièvres

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drew in his head and listened with redoubled care, ready for a counterstroke. "Your Grace has indeed promised that this should be done, but your councilors always do the opposite of what you promise."

With an air of complete innocence, and of great concern at such dreadful news which he must, officially speaking, have found extremely shocking, Chièvres threw a sidelong glance at Aleander; the latter was almost speechless with rage.

"The heretic must be imprisoned here, in this very building, under my eyes," shouted Aleander; "and no one must see him without my permission."

"I will certainly consider this," answered Chièvres in a conciliatory tone, and was delighted at the council's obedience in failing (by his order) to carry out any of his promises. So this time they had not succumbed to Aleander's bribes. Excellent. But he hoped they had taken the Pope's money—Chièvres began to feel a quite paternal anxiety on this point.

"Your Grace promised me faithfully to have the heretic executed," asserted Aleander in a menacing tone.

"Whatever I promised," answered Chièvres with an air of extreme uprightness, "that I will certainly, most certainly, fulfill."

Aleander clutched his right arm with his left hand; he had to control himself. But it was not easy. Glapion's persistent silence, which was extremely irritating and hostile, and the attitude of the old villain, pointed to the fact that he had been fooled on purpose so that the Spanish Inquisition might be extorted from him.

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"If this ruffian is going to have the insolence to appear before the Emperor and the Diet," went on Aleander in a high voice, his hand clenched on the great gold cross on his chest, "because your Council show such a remarkable sense of justice on a matter which Rome, as the appropriate authority, has already legally decided, the heretic must not be allowed any right of discussion; he comes here as an excommunicated person. I call upon the princes and especially the Elector of Saxony to bear this in mind; he must not try his knaveries on the Estates of the Empire."

"So far as I know, my dear Lord Nuncio," replied Chièvres in a most conciliatory tone, "his Highness the Elector of Saxony is at Mass in the cathedral. I suggest that your Grace should yourself be at the pains to tell him all this. I do not care to mix in ecclesiastical matters which I do not understand; they are not within my purview."

Aleander mastered himself.

"Pray, dear Brother Glapion," he said, "announce me at once to the Great Chancellor Gattinara. My business in the cathedral will be brief."

Glapion, impenetrable, bowed stiffly.

Aleander disappeared.

Chièvres stared thoughtfully over his angular crooked shoulder at the door latch, and then looked down at his writing board once more.

"Tell the Roman fool," he said after a while, in a more lively tone than hitherto, "that the Great Chancellor Gattinara is ill. This imbecile Aleander thinks

that every one must dance to his tune. We will show him his mistake."

Now was the time for extreme caution. Glapion emerged from his cowl like a snail that comes forth slowly and tentatively, ready at any moment to retire within its shell again. He must not ruin himself with Aleander, nor, indeed, with the all-powerful Chièvres. But even less with the Great Chancellor, who was on the point of seizing all power for himself.

"His Majesty is a true son of the Roman Catholic Church, Herr von Chièvres," said Glapion deferentially, "and everything that injures the sacred traditions of the Church is an abomination in his eyes."

Chièvres nodded in satisfaction and agreement, as though he had expected to hear nothing else; and as though he were proud of his young imperial master's piety.

"It would, however, certainly be an equal abomination to his Majesty," he answered condescendingly, "to learn that his French confessor"—he laid a special emphasis on the word French—"whom I introduced to him, has been acting injudiciously. The Emperor must get the Roman Inquisition in Spain into his own hands."

"Most noble lord, I referred to that point in every one of my conversations with the Lord Nuncio, but Herr Aleander's obstinacy seemed to indicate that Rome desired some compensation from us."

"I know what the compensation is," replied Chièvres and smacked his lips as though he were rolling a tasty morsel in his toothless jaws; "but I can only supply

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the compensation if I have first seen the service which it is to compensate."

"We are all servants of his Majesty," replied Glapion, his head thrust forward sideways with a polite and tentative air. "Even the mightiest counselor of his Majesty must be completely subject to his Emperor's will."

Herr von Chièvres nodded once or twice in complete agreement, and waited.

"If his Majesty had thought it well, my lord," said Glapion, carefully weighing every word, "he would have long since handed over the heretic to Rome."

The small, enigmatic, lined face of the Emperor's former tutor assumed a strange expression. Glapion had never ventured so far as this. Chièvres glanced up with his brooding eyes, in which there were flecks of yellow like those in the eyes of an old and emaciated, but still powerful and dangerous tiger. Glapion changed his demeanor. He retired within himself and looked at Chièvres with an air of complete devotion and deference.

"My dear young imperial master has very delicate health," said Chièvres, and Glapion nodded. "He depends on me with an almost childish affection. He would never undertake anything of which I did not approve."

Glapion bowed deeply in token of assent.

Chièvres smiled a friendly melancholy smile at the imperial confessor's bent head and said, "If any one drives my young imperial master into hasty action I

shall destroy that person." This was an order, a threat, and an entreaty. Glapion stiffened.

"My dear young imperial master," Chièvres went on with great cordiality, folding his yellowed hands together with an air of benevolence and concern, "must have faithful followers in all his kingdom and more especially in this troublesome land of Germany. France will go on pouring her gold across the Rhine to make difficulties for us here, and this I must prevent; and then"—Chièvres smiled with melancholy emotion—"I must get my young imperial master married so that he may get out of his financial difficulties. And that must be soon, for my life is drawing to its end."

Sternly as Glapion had kept himself in hand, iron and immovable as had been his mastery of his face and eyes, he recognized with terror that the old fox before him had read the thought that had suddenly burst forth in his mind: "If you die the Pope will win!" Glapion tried to save what there was yet to save. He gazed at Chièvres with a sympathetic, soothing, deprecating smile, but he could not uproot a new thought from his mind: Rome could never have succeeded in whipping up the Spanish Revolution if Chièvres had not been plundering the Spanish Treasury in the way he had done during the preceding ten years.

It was dreadful that a man could not entirely control himself, that there should be some singular element within him that was never entirely in his power. Perhaps it was the soul, of which these Germans so constantly talked? This soul that was alleged to come

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from God, that uprose in a man, always at inopportune moments, against all reason and conviction.

Glapion cleared his throat, shook himself in alarm and recognized from Chièvres' intent attitude that those small malignant eyes had read this thought likewise in his mind.

The Emperor's former tutor musingly contemplated the broad seal ring on his raised flabby-skinned forefinger; then he thoughtfully inspected the protuberant harsh veins of his hands; and he felt once more the sickness rising from his heart to his neck—a sickness that had utterly overcome him more and more often.

So they thought they could already pass him by? The air grew dark with hatred.

"Even if I am to die soon," said Chièvres with bowed head, "he who crosses my purpose will die before me."

Chièvres again turned his diminutive head over his shoulder and saw with satisfaction that the other was in a state of complete collapse—his knees were as water and would hardly bear him.

"Leave me, dear friend," said Chièvres in a kindly tone. "There is an Embassy from the Indian Islands that I must receive, and the Crown lands of Flanders and Brabant are afflicted with many German gentlemen who are petitioning for their tenures to be confirmed."

Chièvres' expression was contemptuous. He did not need to study Glapion's face, it was enough to observe the lower part of his habit, and his feet, which stood askew as though the body they supported had received a stunning blow.

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"Well, my lively friend?" said Chièvres as the other still remained motionless.

"I am your obedient servant, my lord," replied Glapion in a husky voice. Chièvres closed his wrinkled eyes in delight for an instant. He enjoyed the confessor's terror.

"I have seen many people die," said Chièvres, looking in front of him, "and I have caused many people to be sentenced to death, and I should not care to place another death sentence before the young Emperor for signature."

"I am truly and entirely your obedient servant, and forever, my Lord Great Chamberlain."

"I referred to the heretical monk, dear friend. I hope you have not, after all, misunderstood me?"

"I understood your Grace perfectly."

"Excellent. Let me decide when you shall put your heretic to death; I hate him no less than you. But it would be a wrong move to induce the Emperor to condemn the heretical teaching before the heretic has been heard. Even if Herr Gattinara himself wants to issue the edict of condemnation, I do not wish it. Have you understood me, Herr Glapion?"

"Yes . . . your . . . Grace."

Glapion left the room with quivering legs and tottering feet. The breath of dissolution was upon him. He must attach himself to Gattinara, and at once, or Chièvres would have him murdered.

What was that?

He pressed his hand against his chest.

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The voice within him began to speak once more, this tormenting voice that he had not known hitherto.

Was it the air of this strange land that so affected him?

The voice bade him do the duty of his calling, without intrigue, without guile, without cowardice or self-interest; and, in return, the voice promised him peace and happiness.

Glapon breathed deeply; that trusty friend, that dark shape, arose within him and spoke once more of deliverance.

"Fear not this old creature just about to roll into his grave; fear only thine own weakness which can rob thee of thy power. Think of Luther."

Luther? That was it! Luther, indeed!

It was the devilish influence of the approaching heretic. This heresy had already tempted him, it moved with a speed of a pestilence, like witches swooping through the air, and would settle upon him and poison him.

The edict must be issued; the heretic must be put out of the way at once.

He went to Gattinara.

CHAPTER IV

UNDER the portal on which was the inscription cast in bronze, announcing the centuries-old privilege relieving the city for all time from all episcopal dues, Aleander entered the cathedral.

Here was a world that he knew. Coolness, stillness and space. Tremendous, austere, and immovable towered the gigantic gray stone pillars, hewn from vanished mountains, over the devout worshipers. They seemed like enormous balks turned to stone, that joined earth to heaven. The little pointed flames of the altar candles flickered with a reddish glow. The air reeked of incense and wax; he could hear the sound of Latin prayers, the language of the lordship of the world. Aleander felt a peace, his head was clear.

The little confessor was right: the people of this land must be treated differently. Hitherto they had been dealt with far too indulgently. Rome had always wooed these lumbering blockheads, taken them at their own value, flattered them as though they had been the most precious race on earth. But now, thanks to the stupidity with which God had endowed them, they were ruled by an Emperor from a foreign land, and the Pope had at last become aware of the danger from the German heretic. The time for action was at hand.

Aleander, as he strode over the gravestones on the

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floor, stared at the countless votive tablets and pictures on the walls, that the hands of true piety had placed there. In one of the aisles he saw a page boy standing, wearing the colors of Saxony; and the page was holding an Elector's hat.

With a very few attendants Frederic of Saxony was kneeling before one of the beautiful carved side altars.

Aleander's curved beak audibly sniffed the air. So the fat crafty badger was in a humble mood? Excellent; he could easily bend him to the will of Rome. These arrogant German princes generally insisted on always praying before the high altar; and long negotiations were necessary every day to regulate the proper order of the sacred rites and decide between privileges claimed and those actually due.

The Papal Nuncio turned aside through the incense smoke, swung from censers in long gray clouds up into the mighty nave by the diminutive white-clad ministrants moving to and fro in that soul-mine, through the warning tinkle of bells that brought the worshipers to their knees, and made his way to the group of Saxons.

The Elector was kneeling; he wore dark apparel, his great bearded head with its curled hair was deeply and devoutly bowed, and his hands were ingenuously folded under his chin.

Amid the awe-inspiring stillness of the church, and the mutter of the Masses at the countless altars, the Legate's rasping voice broke into the absorption of the electoral devotions.

"Your Electoral Grace has been pleased until now to

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put off my repeated request for an audience on the consistently untrue pretext of illness. I have not yet reported this to his Holiness in Rome, because, before you were led astray, your Grace rendered many services to our Holy Roman Catholic Church."

Frederic's corpulent middle-sized form jerked forward, and then did not move. His thick dark-red lips protruding from his full gray beard were still; he had ceased to pray. He knelt as though he had received a shock, sunk in his aloofness, with his back and his round drooping shoulders turned towards the Papal Legate.

"But there is an end to the Holy Father's patience," went on Aleander threateningly. "He will deprive the German people of the Empire if your Grace does not check the heresy that is spreading from your Grace's realm over the Empire and the other lands of Europe."

Frederic heavily raised his wrinkled face, almost entirely covered by the beard that reached up to the forehead and eyes, and looked at Aleander in melancholy reproach. With a long slow movement the Elector, still on his knees, turned towards his followers who stood around him in silence with questioning and startled looks; they had laid their hands on the hilts of their swords.

"Tell this messenger of the Pope," said Frederic in a heavy voice, "that in German lands it is not the custom to disturb God's holy worship; that we are not used to introduce worldly business, bitterness and threats into the Holy Mass. Tell his Holiness that our dear Lord Jesus would not have wished it."

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And though this shy and diffident Elector was a man of much self-mastery, a dark, angry red began to color his full cheeks and broad forehead.

"This mad monk," replied Aleander, "has obtained a safe conduct here by your Grace's influence upon the estates of the Empire whom your Grace has stirred up against Rome. Will your Grace make known to his subjects that every adherent of this monk, whether he be knight or monk, may be excommunicated."

The Chancellor Brück, with a gold chain across his protruding chest like that of a thoroughbred tournament stallion, bearded and corpulent like his electoral master, walked threateningly up to Aleander.

"Let his Lordship finish his devotions."

Aleander with his right hand pushed aside the Saxon Chancellor, whose expression grew positively savage, and continued: "Your Grace has proved his support of the heretic by writing a safe-conduct for the excommunicated monk, in which your Grace addresses him as your 'worshipful, reverend, learned, beloved and pious friend.'"

Aleander laughed contemptuously at Frederic's upturned troubled eyes.

"Whether the heretical scoundrel is a friend of your Grace's or not, I do not know, but the other titles, that your Grace is pleased to bestow on the heretic, prove your Grace's hostile attitude to the Holy Roman Catholic Church. No true Christian should call one whom Rome has condemned reverend or worshipful, or even pious. Your Grace says that which is not true

when you constantly announce that you would not defend the heretic's teaching against the Holy Pope and the Church. The Emperor is a true son of the Church, and if your Grace does not renounce this stinking heretic forthwith and completely, then the Pope will treat your Grace as a heretic also, and the Emperor must realize that you are walking in the ways of your forefather, who received from the King of the French the holy thorn from the Crown of our Savior as a reward for conspiring against the German Empire."

But here Aleander came to an abrupt stop. He even started back a pace, for Frederic rose from his praying stool more quickly than would have been thought possible for a man of his bulk. He quivered with agitation, but he still did not look at Aleander.

"Tell this person," said Frederic to his attendants in a voice that emerged heavy with anger from his great beard, "that I am not the man to whom such an offer should be made. Chancellor Brück, you may, if you please, listen to this person, who disturbs our worship, but I do not bid you do so. It is not my pleasure to hear more of him. I am a Christian, who understands nothing of our heavenly Father's dealings with us, except that I know humility beseems us in all matters that concern Him."

Without deigning to glance at Aleander, Frederic, with long heavy strides, and in a state of high excitement, left the cathedral. His attendants, gathering closely round him, followed him out.

Without a word the dark-clad company of Saxons

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crossed the sunlit, unevenly paved graveyard. They walked between the rows of crosses over the graves, from which the young green herbage was springing, and many of the faithful were kneeling with heads bent in silent prayer, to the outer gate.

Brück departed. With anxious mien he wandered through the fragrant, heavy spring air to his chancery.

CHAPTER V

THERE the Emperor's confessor awaited him. Glapion was in a genial mood; he clapped his graceful hands and laughed aloud when he heard what had happened in the cathedral.

"Yes, this is Aleander's bad day," he cried, beaming; "whether it is because he slept badly, or whether the continual demonstrations of the citizens here before his lodgings had annoyed him, he is making every possible mistake."

There was an expression of troubled reproach on Brück's heavily bearded face as he looked at the courtly monk.

"Is the Emperor," asked the Saxon Chancellor, whose thick blood made his mind sluggish, "is the Emperor really set against my master the Elector? Doctor Luther assured me, and I have known him intimately for many years, that he has no notion of any heretical purpose and that he is a true son of our Church. He wants to serve our Holy Church and not to harm her, as the lord Aleander thinks."

"The Emperor has read your monk's writings with the greatest pleasure," replied Glapion lightly.

Brück's anxious face was now completely mystified, his bulbous cheeks began to quiver. "But the Emperor

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does not know either Latin or German?" he answered helplessly.

"Your professor has a noble heart," replied Glapion hastily, "and his mind will bring forth profitable fruit, if he will abandon his violence and place himself once more under our Holy Roman Church. Doctor Luther will always be an honor to your country. For myself, I find everything he says and writes highly disputable."

Brück's eyes—poor, dazed, honest man—grew as round as saucers with amazement.

"It is just the manner, the fury with which your monk speaks and acts that I find so shocking."

"Doctor Luther desires to serve our Holy Church, not to harm her—he desires to serve her," cried Brück, seized by a fear he did not understand.

"Your monk has shown a very natural anger," replied Glapion, and snapped his fingers with an evasive deprecatory gesture; "but this anger will pass. It is the Emperor's dearest wish that your monk should be reconciled with the Roman Church that administers the gifts of Jesus to the world."

"That has not been our impression until now, most honored sir; it is the general opinion in German lands that the intention is to kill Herr Luther."

"Oh, my Lord Chancellor!"

"Yes, to kill him, because since his appearance and as the result of his writings, gold flows to Rome more slowly than hitherto."

"Rome cares nothing for earthly wealth," said Glapion reprovingly. "The Holy Father accepts the

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tribute of the faithful for the fleet and the army, to protect the Holy Church that secures the salvation of the faithful."

"Our Lord Jesus in His poverty defended His doctrine very well; He needed no soldiers."

That was it. That was the heretic's tone. The earth trembled beneath Glapion's feet, but he smiled, pressed his folded arms together and swayed his body to and fro.

"We are of one opinion," said he.

Brück, without taking his eyes from Glapion's face, stretched out his right arm and with a slow deliberate movement laid it flat on the table to steady himself, for he felt the room turning round him. His body bent forward, he stared suspiciously at the Emperor's confessor.

"What will become of this reform of our Holy Church," asked Glapion, "if your monk loses his life here?"

Brück paled and his face began to work. He leaned his hand even more powerfully against the table to conceal the trembling that had seized him.

Glapion looked through the dusty windowpanes and incidentally answered his own question: "Send him a message before it is too late."

"Herr Luther wants to prove to the Reichstag that his teaching is in no way heretical," said Brück with frozen lips. And he cried in an agony of fear: "He comes to bring peace to human souls, Herr Glapion, believe me."

"That is a very noble purpose, my Lord Chancellor of Saxony, but I am thereby induced to repeat my advice that the monk should not be allowed to enter this city. His life is in danger here."

"Yes, that is Roman justice."

"Why then do you want him here where there is so much Roman injustice?"

"Luther has imperial and royal safe conducts that guarantee him his life."

"No one is compelled to give safe conduct to a declared and condemned heretic."

Brück's nostrils swelled contemptuously.

"What do you mean by that?" he said menacingly.

"Many heretics have had safe conducts, my Lord Chancellor, and were none the less burnt. Every night a dozen men are murdered here. Send your monk a message quickly; he must not come."

"It is too late," answered Brück in a dull voice, and a cold shudder shook his powerful frame. "Herr Doctor Luther may arrive at any moment."

Glapion's expression changed. "Then he and your game is lost," he said curtly.

"Rome does not rule here; the Diet of the German nation is the authority in Worms," cried Brück.

"If your monk enters the city, he will go one way and one way only, from the Bishop's palace to the stake."

Brück compressed his lips and now began to look at the other with malignant savagery. Glapion started

back and turned. The brutality of these cold Germans was showing itself.

"We are just as concerned for your salvation as you for ours," said Brück, heaving up his great shoulders as he straightened himself. "My master, the Elector, reflected that a man excommunicated by the Pope must not live in the Bishop's palace, where the Emperor is residing. We have taken a lodging for Herr Doctor Luther quite near where the Elector is staying."

"Indeed? And in order that the heretic may not be observed as he enters the city you sent a hundred of your knights in broad daylight to meet him. Did you not?"

"Now you are speaking candidly, Herr Glapion; now I know what is in your mind."

"I will be even more candid."

Slowly, and with venomous satisfaction, the Emperor's confessor pulled out a paper from his habit and displayed it.

"Would my Lord Chancellor of Saxony deign to read this?"

Brück stared at the other. He did not trust himself to take the paper. With a courteous inviting gesture, like the diabolic tempter, Glapion held out the sheet to him. It was printed! Was it the edict that had been threatened so long? Was it printed already? Brück bent his head; it was the movement of a tortured animal about to charge, thought Glapion, and he made ready to spring aside if the other should attempt to

attack him. Brück took the order, held it tremblingly under his wavering eyes, and read it.

It was the edict signed by the Emperor. It prohibited all Luther's writings in German lands, ordered their immediate surrender to the authorities, and threatened every adherent of the monk with confiscation of his property, ban, and interdict.

Brück looked as though he had been plunged in deep water and was drowning.

With raised forefinger, Glapion went on emphatically.

"Read more especially the passage, my Lord Chancellor of Saxony, in which it is stated that the Emperor has resolved not to tolerate the introduction of new doctrines and errors into our holy religion. Mark closely the passage where it says that the Emperor only gave your monk a safe conduct that he might here openly recant all that he has hitherto written and preached; and above all, my Lord Chancellor, read carefully the end stating that the Emperor will take such action as may be proper in the interests of the Holy See."

Brück's unengaged hand dropped, and the one holding the paper wavered, as though he wanted to destroy the sentence of condemnation, but could not find the strength to do so. Slowly he raised his eyes; they were lifeless and troubled, and in them was horror and despair, profound pity and helpless rage. If Luther did not now unconditionally recant, he was doomed to death forthwith.

"The edict will be posted this very hour on all the church doors," explained Glapion genially; "so you see the monk is condemned from the moment he enters the city."

The little confessor's sharply observant eyes noticed that Brück's heavy frame staggered, that this iron and unshakable man, who could dominate the Diet of the princes, had given all up for lost. Glapion breathed a sigh of relief; the new faith could hardly be established if it was so frightened of the old one.

"Come, I will show you something else." And Glapion led the broken man who, outwardly, obeyed him without resistance, towards the window.

Brück looked through the tiny panes in their dull frames down on to the paved market place. Imperial servants in short jerkins, under the protection of Spanish halberdiers, behind whose lines the square was black and swarming with startled, staring men and women, were piling with their bare muscular arms large balks of timber, with layers of straw between them, into a lofty pyre.

Brück started and groped his way back into the half-darkness of the chancery, and hid his face. Glapion made as though to speak, but remained silent, as the horn of the watchman rang out from the cathedral tower.

The horn was only blown in the event of a surprise attack, or the arrival of an important personage.

Had Luther come? Did the horn mean that?

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If so, then the city was on his side, for it had greeted him as an important guest.

It was now utterly still in the half-light of the chancery across which fell the sharp harsh shadow of the cathedral tower; the only sound that could be heard was Brück's heavy breathing, and the hum of the flies in the corners and under the low-timbered roof, and their angry buzz as they bumped against it.

Then arose an uproar under the windows.

It swelled into a tumult. Glapion sprang to look. The crowds below had fallen into the wildest commotion; they all turned and went; and the square round the pyre was empty.

The stream of people poured shouting into the alleys leading to the Mainz gate, and disappeared. Once more the square was filled; from all the houses and the side alleys burst forth more crowds waving their arms and shouting; they sped after the others, until, once more, not a face was to be seen.

Everywhere the wildest uproar and shouts of joy; and the air was thick with rumors.

Suddenly a shrill disembodied cry: "The German Prophet is at hand; hail to our Deliverer!"

"Tell the Elector, your master," said Glapion, who had grown pale, "that I pray for him most heartily. Praised be Jesus Christ, my Lord Chancellor of Saxony; may He watch over you and your master."

CHAPTER VI

ABOVE the heaving throngs of people, who stood huddled together in joyous expectation, peered the head of a tall Rhine shipman under a large flat hat; and this is what he saw:

The Saxon knights rode on a broad front, proudly now and leaning stiffly backwards in their saddles. They closely surrounded a lightly built, jolting cart, sadly worn out with much travel. The corpulent Imperial Herald, Sturm, rode in front of it, resplendent, topped with swaying plumes, and followed by his attendants. In honor of his mission, he had slung his short riding cloak so as to display in front of him its gayly embroidered imperial eagle. His face revealed that he was returning from a ceremony of welcome much to his liking.

Every window, every dormer, even the projecting beams of the attics were occupied; the good men of Worms sat astride the steep roofs, clung to gables and copings, waved their arms and kerchiefs and shouted.

The procession turned in a wide free curve into the *Kämmererstrasse*. And sitting in the little tipping cart the Rhine shipman saw an old Augustinian monk. That was not Luther. The old man looked with awkward dull defiance at the excited mob escorting and greeting him, from which rose threatening shouts: "Stone the

corrupters of God's word; drown the Roman thieves—a new time is at hand.”

Near the Augustinian who, in accordance with the law of his Order that no monk must travel alone, was accompanying Luther, sat a youth in student's dress. The occupants of the cart, which was drawn by two jaded hacks, were concealed by a round linen covering stretched over hoops.

“Whither now, Herald?” cried some voices.

“Follow your noses,” replied Herr Kaspar Sturm. The men of Worms shouted and laughed and the street boys skipped about in delight. They yelled at Sturm. His fleshy sunburnt face under his cap, with its great plume of billowing feathers in the imperial colors, swayed and nodded in gratitude and pride.

“Hurrah for Sturm,” shouted they. “He has brought Luther safely here. *Vivat Sturm!*”

“You're a fine fellow; you kept him safe. *Vivat!*”

“Hurrah for Luther,” shouted a voice. “We will show these Roman dogs!”

And hundreds took up the cry.

The city men-at-arms at the street corners looked anxiously at the burghers who were their officers. The chief alderman took off his hat and bowed deeply to the rocking cart as it passed him surrounded by its escort of horsemen. The city men-at-arms stood to attention and crashed the shafts of their pikes in welcome on to the cobbled pavement.

The cart stopped in front of the *Johanniterhof*.

When the tall Rhine shipman tried to elbow his way,

like a greedy frog in a hurry, through the now impenetrable throng, some one knocked his hat from his head, and a monk's tonsure became visible. "A spy of Aleander's." They beat and belabored him until the spy ran off howling with his clothes in tatters.

The mighty crowd all stood on tiptoe.

There was so deep a silence that from the silent blue of heaven could be heard the hungry, choked cry of the hawks as they circled round the tall, stern church steeples. White, snow-white like a gigantic dove, dropping down to earth, something fell slowly through the air—it was a baker boy's apron, floating outspread, which some one clinging to a chimney pot had waved from far above. The old monk and the student got down from the cart.

Then a man in the dress of a professor appeared, and stretched out his hand to the interior of the cart, to help the last invisible occupant to get out.

This must be the bold monk.

The crowd stood breathless, open-mouthed, staring.

There he was. A monk, of middle height, thin, with sloping shoulders under his snow-white habit, got quickly down. They knew him from the pictures and fly-sheets; it was Luther. Before the shouts and acclamation, before the mighty swelling roar of welcome had reached their height, he had disappeared under the archway of the *Johanniterhof*.

The crowd pressed forward as though they would rush that stone house. But mailed arms flung them back out of the dark passageway; a living wall guarded

the monk who hurried up the creaking wooden stairway and disappeared above.

The door was swung to and bolted.

"This way, Herr Doctor," said a respectful voice in the darkness of the house.

A door opened, light appeared, and Luther entered a longish paneled room about the height of a man. The thick panes of the small windows only admitted a meager dim light into the room, which smelt pleasantly of fresh herbage and clover.

"Here you will be safe. We could get nothing else. Every house is full to the attics. God preserve you, Herr Doctor!"

Some one laughed—an ugly, harsh, tormented laugh. They all turned in alarm and apprehension. A tall thin man in a worn leather doublet and tightly fitting hose stood, legs apart, with a threatening air. He had a small reddish beard, and he stared at the excommunicated monk with a piercing, threatening look.

Profound silence.

The lean monk with the firm broad forehead and the tall knight took each other's measure. The monk's great eyes began to glitter and flash white; then they dimmed once more. Luther turned away and said:

"I had not expected so excellent a room. I thought my lodging would be the torture chamber."

"You must share this poor room, I am afraid," said a short, elaborately dressed knight. "We have taken your traveling companions down into the taproom and the cellar. You won't find anything much cleaner than

this. You share the lodging with me and Herr von Kriechingen, known as the doleful toper."

"Shut your mouth, Schott!" roared the tall man in the threadbare leather doublet, and raised his fist.

With a smile, to avoid any further dispute, Luther sat on one of the straw pallets on the herb-strewn floor. He crossed his thin bare legs and began to unlace his now irksome sandals.

"Leave the worthy Herr Doctor alone," begged the little knight, "he is still very weary of body." They nodded good-naturedly and turned obediently to the door; but a cry from Luther stopped them.

"Oh, well," said he in a high voice, and shook his sandals to rid them of the bits of straw that had covered the floor of the cart; "my health is quite good enough for burning and quartering."

The men at the door threw an anxious, startled look at each other. In their eyes was the confession that hitherto they had hidden from each other, but now it was there for all to see; and they sought support and counsel.

They were disappointed.

They had expected the warrior for the purification of God's teaching, for the deliverance of Germany, to be some one quite other than this. They looked for some one of quite other appearance and quite other temper.

Here was a boorish little monk who burst into clumsy cheerfulness because every one round him was nervous

and depressed. There was nothing heroic or titanic about this monk.

He was of a feeble habit of body and looked insignificant and harmless.

They stared with an embarrassed air at the trodden flowers on the floor which they had strewn with fresh herbage in honor of their hero, as though for a procession of the Host.

They felt they had been made to look ridiculous.

A red flush spread over Luther's heavy cheek bones: he bowed his head with its broad tonsure, that only left a small edging of dark-brown hair. Then he stooped, and amid the agonizing silence of the rest, the cause of which he understood only too well, he laced up his sandals once more. Upon a further imploring look from the little knight, all left the room.

Luther stayed as he was, bent almost double, and again fumbled for a while over the straps of his sandals until he was stirred from his absorption by a touch on his shoulder. He raised his head with an effort; his face was yellow, vacant and sunken, and there was a wandering look in his heavily-ringed eyes.

"Herr Doctor," said the little knight, "I see you know that the position is serious? They have already condemned you."

Luther, to conceal the shudder that passed over him, hastily clasped his great emaciated hands and clutched his knees with them in a steadying embrace.

"Why did you come here?" asked the little knight sadly.

"God made me come."

Luther's voice was hoarse.

"And how if the Emperor delivers you up to the papal party? Our Lord Elector is much concerned about this. Your face is drawn and bloodless: you must not overtax yourself, Herr Doctor."

"You may be very sure that our Lord Jesus will give me strength to endure any martyrdom."

"Perhaps you will not be brought before the Diet again."

Once more Luther changed color and this time more dreadfully than before: his face grew ashen. The little knight lost his last shred of confidence.

Luther smiled. It was like the smile of a sick, but very good child, that wants to do its utmost to get well.

"What makes me tremble," said Luther—and his voice, which had hitherto sounded shrill and cracked, grew deep and steady—"proves that no poor human creature can exist without God's help. Trust to that—God lives in every man, even in so sorry a being as I; and He will reveal Himself through me if it should be necessary."

Luther rose with a quick powerful movement: a servant had come in with a broad white apron bound round his body. Sniffing contemptuously, he began to lay the table in the middle of the room. He did it with a very professional air and did not look at the heretic; but he secretly cast furtive and highly interested glances at him.

Luther, with his shoulders drawn up, walked awk-

wardly across to the window, and looked up at the colored sky.

The servant placed the pewter mugs at intervals down the table. He shook his overshaven head in his doubts of human reason. What was all this useless to-do? What was this turmoil they were all making about this wretched monk? Was this why all the streets were full and all the taverns empty? Was this the half-starved friar that had set all the spiritual and lay princes of Europe by the ears for so many months? Was it on his account that business was at a standstill and every house was full of quarrels, disputations and confusion. Was this why, evening after evening, less and less was drunk, because every one was brawling over this boor?

The servant suddenly jerked his head with its load of crockery and dropped a plate on the floor: the excommunicated heretic had turned and looked at him.

"Go on laying the table in peace, good man," said Luther in a friendly tone; "I am properly hungry."

"If you have no objection," said Schott, "a few gentlemen are dining with us who are longing to make your acquaintance."

The little knight shrank back, the corners of his mouth trembled nervously and in fresh dismay: Luther had burst into a loud and ringing laugh. A great coarse laugh, like that of a student full of beer or a peasant brawling at a consecration festival. The servant had disappeared.

"What is the matter, pray?" asked Schott impatiently, in a tone of dull hostility.

"He was sprinkling holy water at me. I suppose he thought I was the Devil?"

"Do you know that all the princes are against you?" answered Schott; and his vacant eyes twitched as he made up his mind to desert this singular monk as soon as possible. "Our Lord Elector can do nothing more for you—nothing at all."

Luther smiled again, a winning smile. With a kindly, comforting gesture he laid his hand on the bewildered little knight's shoulder. "How should the word of God, that has been so mishandled, come forth in splendor," he said with a radiant boyish air, "if men were not set against it?"

The little knight's troubled eyes began to shine once more with joy and hope. Here at last were words such as they had looked to hear often from Luther.

"We shall stand by you."

In a good-humored tone, but with a suddenly reflective air, the lean monk answered him.

"I pray you, no: our Lord Jesus forbade the sword to Peter, when he wanted to strike with it on the Mount of Olives, and He knew why He did so."

Schott turned hastily, placed a warning hand on his mouth and sprang aside.

Some nobles and a few councilors of state came in. They bowed gravely and stood courteously waiting. Through the still open doors an agitated crowd of white-capped servants came bursting in, bearing high

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above their heads a gigantic smoking haunch of venison. This they placed upon the table with jugs full of beer.

It was a friendly, modest monk who sat composedly down to dinner in the company of his respectful guests.

The street in front of the *Johanniterhof* and all the alleys and squares near-by were packed with the citizens of Worms with their children beside them, all standing in devout silence. Their eyes, full of faith and expectation, were turned to Luther's windows.

CHAPTER VII

ALEANDER had been so long raging and shouting up and down the corridors of the Bishop's palace that the Great Chancellor had at last to admit him.

"Some half-witted nun took him in her arms as he was getting out of his tumbril," roared Aleander: "she touched him as though he had been a sacred relic, and went away as though she were parting from the Divine Bridegroom. Let him be imprisoned forthwith, or the Pope's patience will be at an end."

"Your Pope's patience will endure," said Gattinara, adjusting his ungainly form in a chair, and speaking in a firm bass voice, but his cunning, bright mule's eyes were wide awake and intent upon the Nuncio, who had so marvelously lost all his dignity. "When a man has let himself fall between two horses, he must not be surprised to find himself squatting on the ground."

"If you do not obey me at once," shouted Aleander, with drawn lips that showed his teeth, "we shall kindle such a fire in your country as all the water of the seas shall not suffice to put out. My messenger waits; at a sign from me he will ride to Rome; the ban will crash down upon your imperial stripling, and we shall make the King of France his successor."

"You are marvelously candid," said Gattinara ap-

provingly, with thick satisfaction, and he banged his fist delightedly upon a small inlaid Moorish table that stood near him: "magnificently candid."

"He is still wearing the cowl," cried Aleander. "He has the insolence to ignore the ban."

"Strange!" said Gattinara with pursed mouth and round contemptuous eyes.

"You will soon hear stranger news."

"We have heard them already," said Gattinara, and at a stroke became dangerously in earnest. Aleander listened, stricken by an uneasy conscience. "You have summoned the Turkish fleet to where it lies off our city of Naples; you pay the French troops on our frontiers to attack us. That is why we do not help you, for a Christian must not tolerate threats and violence." Gattinara then turned completely round to Aleander, and laying one outstretched leg comfortably over the other, he continued: "We are the sword of the Defender of Christendom, whose duty it is to see that no one shall go unpunished who subverts the word of God into its opposite."

"The arch-hectic must recant or be executed at once, or else my messenger rides to Rome. We can influence your banking houses."

"Do not be too confiding," said Gattinara warningly, and sat straight and solid in his chair with close-set mouth. "You reveal too much. The Diet will now refuse you the levy for the Turkish war as it is known you are going to use the money to pay your Turkish allies to fight against us."

Aleander stared round the richly furnished room as though he were looking for something he could throw at the Great Chancellor's head. Was Gattinara threatening like Glapion? Where was the confessor? "You shall see him at once," said the Great Chancellor with contemptuous satisfaction, and rang.

They interrupted their duet to look at the heavily embroidered door curtain, with its great red and yellow design, hanging from the gilded pole.

Aleander's eyes began to flash as though in madness. He realized that the confessor had been detached from him, that he was lost to him as an ally.

"At what are you conspiring?" he cried to Glapion, as the latter entered. "There is poison and torture waiting for you, too."

Gattinara nodded with satisfaction: it was all working out splendidly, like a perfectly planned game of chess. The two were enemies at last.

"Well?" asked Gattinara, "has his Majesty refused to admit the Chancellor of Saxony?"

"Yes, my lord," answered Glapion, with an expression of pale devotion and not looking at Aleander.

"And what further decision has his Majesty taken?" pursued Gattinara.

"His Majesty has agreed that the hearing shall take place soon." Aleander raised his fists.

"So his Majesty abides by the terms of the edict," asked Gattinara, as though he were alone with the Franciscan, "that the monk shall only be heard as to whether he will recognize the Pope's faith or not?"

Glapion nodded with a diffident air.

"Heard!" cried Aleander. "What is the sense in such an edict? What is the meaning of 'faith'? Do you know what faith is? Do you propose to dispute matters of faith with the scoundrel? The brute must not be heard."

"I shall suggest to the Emperor," said Gattinara, "that the monk appear before the Diet to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow? You are mad," shouted Aleander. "He must not be heard. He must recant, at once, this very day, this very hour, or he will get new followers. He must recant at once and be burnt this very day!"

Gattinara burst into such a roar of laughter that Glapion's fragile form cringed into a curve of pain.

"You are mightily afraid of this poor monk?" cried Gattinara, with great satisfaction.

Aleander could not find words. He spat. He spat with venomously drawn lips on the floor in front of Glapion and in front of the Great Chancellor.

"You blackguard!" roared Gattinara, jerking forward menacingly in his chair, "if you do not know how people behave here, leave the Imperial Palace. This is no sty like your altars, where you belch and spit, because you are always swilling."

"We guide the world, not you. You are our paid slaves! If I say go, you must go. We have destroyed others before you—"

"Peace, sir," shouted Gattinara, and his face grew dark: he crashed his great fists onto the carved arms

of the chair until they creaked ominously: Aleander was alarmed and drew back halfway to the door. "If you threaten me, I gave you my faithful promise that you will come to such disaster over this wretched monk as you have never done before. Listen to me," he cut short with imperious curtness an attempt by Aleander to speak; "you are a pack of treacherous impostors, a fact which you do not want brought to light; well and good, I care nothing for that, but now that you openly defy us, the monk shall be heard. I give you my word for that. And now, enough. Go back to your lodging and leave me in peace."

"We cannot consent to a hearing, my lord," stammered Aleander. "Rome is infallible." In his desperation he began to shout once more: "We cannot be treated so. The Pope administers Christ's patrimony, not you, and no one may dictate to him. His exposition of the Bible is right. Your monk expounds the Scriptures falsely."

"Very well," said Gattinara, and grew more and more animated, opening and closing his hands, strong, very muscular hands that probably knew how to grip, "We will come to an agreement."

He paused for a moment: Aleander dropped his lower jaw in dread. Glapion opened his eyes for a moment, and looked at Aleander in dull apprehension. Since the heretic had been in the city he had felt calmer than before: why? And Aleander was now in complete confusion.

"You have reasons for not letting the monk speak in

public," said Gattinara. "It is, on the other hand, to our advantage to let him speak: wherefore we shall let him speak."

"Is that your serious proposal?" stuttered Aleander, and glanced fearfully behind him, in case any murderer might be near-by. He was standing in a corner of the room and did not clearly know how he had got there.

The Great Chancellor got up and stood there, tall and broad shouldered. His bright burnished eyes flashed with quick delight under his black-haired brow.

"It is magnificent to see you so caught in the dilemma," he said, rubbing his hands briskly: "we will hear the heretic publicly and in the greatest detail, unless you hand us over the Spanish Inquisition."

Gattinara walked up and down the room with a satisfied air, a tremendous figure with cunning eyes.

"The Inquisitorial Court recognizes neither witnesses nor advocates: it is a court of which I thoroughly approve."

Aleander looked at Glapion in an appeal for help, but his eyes found no response. The confessor stood with his arms across his chest, and stared immovably at the ground.

"I published the edict as the last and extremest advance we could make," said Gattinara.

"Political business is for Herr Caracciolo and not for me."

"How is Dame Perilla who fell into the hands of the citizens of Worms last night? She is said to have

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come from your room: or were you sleeping with some one else this time?"

"Call your secretary: I am ready to give up the Spanish Inquisition."

CHAPTER VIII

IT was such a day as Worms had never known before.

All the citizens scurried about with faces drawn with fear or lit with joy; every one had heard fresh news that made some rejoice and others anxious. All were in expectation of some prodigious happenings.

All manner of rumors tumbled over each other and swelled to shouting, weeping, or triumphant symphonies in the streets, with brawls and wild embraces.

"The princes are standing by Luther."

"There is always a halo round Luther's head."

"The pyre in front of the town hall is meant for the heretic."

"The tower watchers on the walls have seen armies coming down from heaven."

"A dumb man who touched Luther's coat recovered his speech."

"The knights of the Rhine Valley have agreed to seize the Emperor and the Diet and make them prisoners."

"Aleander's landlord has been throttled by the Devil."

"The Provost says that a one-armed murderer tried to strangle him to get clothes to escape in."

"No!" cried another. "Aleander had him put away because he knew too much about his villainies."

"The Devil tore down the pulpit in St. Stephen's Church when a monk wanted to preach against Luther there."

"There is a dark line in the sky, like a sword or a lance."

"The calendars are right—you can see that the end of the world is near."

The confusion became more ominous as the day went on.

The tradesmen closed their shops: the citizens of Worms went in masses to the churches to pray, to confess, and to eat once more at the Lord's Table. Before the Bishop's palace, and in all places where strangers were lodging there was a continual coming and going of princes, bishops, envoys of the free cities, knights, and foreign ambassadors. Everywhere horses ready-saddled stood waiting in huddled troops. The city looked like an armed camp. Sick men fell down in convulsions, saw visions, and shrieked for help in stricken voices.

The Council issued to the City Guard doublets sewn with steel plates, and troops of men were constantly sent through all the streets, to disperse assemblies and see that order was kept. But they were hooted away, or scattered as soon as their commanders were not looking. A man-at-arms, with his halberd or his great sword under his arm, could often be seen disappearing

into a house or garden with some masterless priest's handmaid.

All the altars were lit up in all the churches. Whole forests of consecrated wax were consumed, and everywhere was heard the sound of chanting. The monasteries mustered all within their walls even to the meanest kitchen-brother: they were sent to the citizens' houses and the small craftsmen, and to the Catholic workmen's guilds, to give of their bounteous store of prayers and good works to all who needed them.

But many doors were shut in the monks' faces: Lutheran writings suddenly appeared in every hand—they fluttered down the street like an invisible rain, none knew whence, and poured into all the houses.

Carts loaded with heavy cannon balls rumbled to the gates and walls. Mailed men-at-arms closed the sally ports. In front of the guild houses gunpowder and arrows were piled up for the reënforcements of the city watch. The main streets were barricaded.

Even the hand workers kept holiday.

Behind the Foundling House sat a master tailor and his assistants in their closed workshop. The richly colored stuffs that knights and lords from all the world ordered and did not pay for, lay untouched. At any moment pitch and brimstone might rain down from heaven. Only just now they had heard a formidable roll of thunder. But when they ran to look, it was only a cart piled^{*} up with empty wine casks that had been upset by the driver's carelessness.

"Many priests," said an apprentice, "give you their

blessing, or take the price of a Mass that they never say."

"Hold your mouth," said the master, peremptorily: "listen to the cutter."

They looked up at the cutter who was sitting with legs crossed, crouched upon the table, in the center of a heap of yellow, green and red trunk hose. He held a small sewing board on his knees.

The cutter began to spell out slowly: "Then the shoemaker asked, 'Who is the greatest among the people? Is it not the Emperor and the princes, the counts and the knights and all the great ones of the law?' Whereupon the canon answered: 'The Pope is Vicar of Christ; after him come the cardinals, and the bishops with all the spiritual Estate: they stand for the sun, and power of this world is the moon: wherefore is the Pope much mightier than the Emperor, who must kiss his feet.'"

"Does our Emperor do that?" asked the tall Heiner in surprise; "does he not kiss his spiritual Lord's hands just like we do?"

"Hold your mouth."

The cutter solemnly pushed his spectacles up onto his forehead and stared with his great eyes from under his long overhanging brows at the set faces before him: "With your permission—the Emperor Karl after the imperial election at Aachen had to throw himself naked on the ground before the nuncios and the lord archbishops, and only when he had promised the spiritual lords representing the Pope that he would forever be-

have obediently to the Holy Father of our Holy Church did they raise him up and clothe him in the garment of a humble cleric. Only so did the Pope permit him to become our King. He is only truly Emperor when the Pope himself has anointed him in Rome."

"Read on," said the master tailor.

"The shoemaker answered, 'If the Pope is so mighty a lord, then he is certainly not the vice-regent of Christ, for Christ said: 'My kingdom is not of this world.'"

The heads nodded slowly.

"Did not Christ say to his disciples: 'The Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister: and whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant.' Wherefore the Pope, and you priests likewise, are but the servants of the Christian community, and may be punished."

"Did a shoemaker truly write that?" asked another respectfully.

"A shoemaker of Nürnberg wrote it and had it printed. The bookkeeper on the *Jungfernsteig* keeps the sheets under his table beneath his dog's basket, and when no priest is by he will let you see them."

"'Oh no,' said the canon, 'the Pope and his priests need not obey God's commandments, as is laid down in Canon Law; whence it follows that the Pope is no

sinner. He is the All-holiest and may not be punished.' 'Oh,' said the shoemaker, 'in the first Epistle of St. John, it is said, "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves": wherefore the Pope is either a sinner or a liar, and cannot be the All-holiest.' "

"Stop," cried Heiner, and grew pale as chalk. "I don't want to have my head cut off."

"'Come, come,' replied the canon, 'you laymen are saucy fellows; it does not besëem a layman to busy himself with Holy Writ: where did you get hold of it?'"

"He is right," cried Heiner nervously.

"Whereupon the shoemaker answered: 'According to the Gospel of St. John, Christ said: "We shall all be instructed of God."' And the canon answered, 'There must be some skill in this matter or why should universities exist?' And the shoemaker answered: 'At what university was St. John who wrote the Gospel? He was only a fisherman: it is written in the Bible 'I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.' Whereupon the canon shouted, 'Enough of you and your Spirit. I can feel no holy Spirit in me. It is not found in the like of you and me.' And the shoemaker said: 'Why then do you call yourselves spiritual lords when you have not the Spirit of God?' There is much other weighty matter in the book," pursued the cutter, "as, for instance, that we poor workmen fast more from necessity than all the monks, nuns and priests together do from faith."

They looked meditatively in front of them: they

all had bitter recollections. They had to pay tithes, dues for pilgrimages, prayer-associations, purchase of relics and the building of churches, for mass-vestments, and a thousand other ecclesiastical objects and equipment, which they neither understood nor saw. Only one thing was certain: their money disappeared. What could they do about it? If they did not pay, their souls would be forfeit to the Devil.

Some one began to pray: they all shook off their thoughts and hastily joined in:

"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

They knelt down.

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Suddenly the apprentice began to howl helplessly. They turned their heads to look at the weeping lad in their midst.

"How can one find out? How can I escape hell, if I do not know what is right?"

The cutter slid down from the table, took the young lad's head to his breast and stroked the tear-stained face with sympathetic, soothing hands. "That is why God has sent us Herr Luther: he will tell us how we may be saved."

"But they say he is to be burnt."

They knelt motionless with grave faces. "The young Emperor is still there," said the cutter with an

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air of cheerfulness; "we will pray that he may protect Herr Luther."

The old man spoke, and they repeated after him:

"Dear Father in Heaven, may our young Emperor keep a strong hand against these Romish thieves. Help him and our reverend archbishops, so that self-seeking may perish, and justice be exalted."

CHAPTER IX

THE twilight was like none that had ever gone before.

Darkness descended upon the city like a gray gauze-like fabric. It surged against the lighted windows, the flashes from the passing lantern-bearers, the sooty exhalations from the torches, that began to move about the dim streets.

From all the inns and houses where the great personages were lodging rang out the blare of trumpets summoning the strangers to the evening meal. From the taverns came the dull wooden blows of the cellar-men's mallets, preparing the casks for the evening draught, now more eagerly sought after than before. But none sat over it for long. In all the streets there would come sudden bustle of hurrying steps and shouts as though there had been a surprise attack. Then all would burst out of doors; and with much muttering and shaking of the head, they came back anxiously to their tables. The city grew more and more confused. Monks, standing in the glare of torches, upon benches, or the parapets of fountains began to call down woe upon humanity; they set up offertory boxes everywhere, over which many stumbled in the darkness; then the boxes were lit up and the streets looked like a vast gridiron, pierced by the flames of hell.

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“Let every man do some good work ere the vengeance of hell swallows him up.”

Dressed in dazzling colors, and in shameful guise, the harlots and secret women flaunted themselves with bared breasts and shoulders from the houses of ill-fame. Many were strangely lit up from within; like the whore of Babylon, they had no longer any fear of being whipped out of the city. Behind St. Sixtus the pretty ladies showed themselves in the open windows, embracing knights and priests, and, leaning out, threw kisses and money into the streets below. In all the dancing houses there was a din of fiddles and flutes; many climbed in through windows and stole what they could find, and others fell upon solitary passers-by in the streets, which were full of messengers and riders hurrying and galloping from one lodging to another. The guild-rooms were overflowing, and there were violent brawls and bitter insults against the City Fathers who wanted to be hand in glove with Rome, and against the ancient families who kept the hand-workers down.

The churches, even to the very tower-windows, were blazing with light, and seemed to be imploring help from the stars that flickered with uneasy radiance in the damp darkness, and commanding them imperiously to give their aid. But the heavens remained dumb.

Great flecks of light began to glow against this blackness.

Continual masses were said against the Devil, who had entered the city in the guise of the Saxon monk,

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and lay there battenning upon it, determined to drink the blood of the faithful before the blessed daylight came again. Time and time again men and women shrieked out when they stumbled over some stray object in the darkness and took it for a clutching arm of Satan, who had spread his horrid snares upon every side to catch and strangle human souls.

The bars of the city gates were let down: the draw-bridge hauled up; and the squat gate-towers and battlements were trebly manned. The watchmen on the walls and ramparts signaled to each other with colored lights by way of inquiry whether all was well or whether reënforcements were needed anywhere. Fire was made ready on all the towers in case of any attempt at surprise from within or without.

Gradually something like calm began to steal over the city. The chimneys ventured to send forth smoke once more, and the citizens fell to their evening meal. The mothers betook them to belated prayers with their children, and then sent them to bed. But all the windows and dormers high up into the pointed roofs and gables were brightly lit. The city looked like a gigantic flotilla of ships huddled together on the dark expanse of ocean, and fearfully awaiting the enemy.

The house in which the premier German Cardinal was lodging had a confused, tumbledown air in the darkness. The curtains of his room were drawn, so that he should not hear the singing from the Jews' synagogue.

"There is only one God, and He alone. One and

Eternal is the God, the Very God, beyond all that is, the God of Israel."

Albrecht of Mainz looked round him; his room was adorned with magnificently carved chairs; the table that stood ready for supper was set with gold plate, and upon the thick red carpet, which deadened every sound, stood an antique sculptured group, a bull carrying off a naked girl who was imploring help with outstretched arms; all this gave him for the time being a sense of security.

The Pope's political Nuncio was visiting the German Cardinal.

"Your countrymen want to turn beauty out of the world and put in its place what your boorish monk calls Truth—a dull and truly German substitute!"

"We are caught," answered the young Elector of Mainz, as he sat there in his red cardinal's robes, with his fist against his temple, staring at the many-armed golden candlesticks in which the tapers were flickering menacingly. "We cannot yield."

The elegant Italian's expression betrayed the satisfaction with which he greeted this confession.

"We have our establishments, our obligations, and if we let so much as a stone be pulled away, the whole building will come crashing to the ground," pursued Albrecht of Hohenzollern. "What would become of us if all our priests, servers, vicars, provosts, man-ciples, abbots, monks, nuns, chaplains and Beguines were suddenly left without bread? They would destroy us and our country too. I say nothing of my bailiffs,

officers, my mounted escort and my clerks. How does Doctor Luther think that hundreds and thousands of such people can suddenly earn their bread when they have hitherto received it at the hands of others?"

"Do you suppose that the Pope would not give way if in his wisdom he did not also foresee something of the kind?" asked Caracciolo, bending forward and looking earnestly at the Cardinal. "He cares little about the Bible, but he cares a great deal about his statues, pictures, painters, sculptors and architects."

The Italian looked with flashing eyes at the effeminate cleric with his thin blond hair and his gluttonous double chin, who was staring with a look of uneasy sadness, and yet with a certain gratified air, at a picture of Mercury.

"We, too, have painters and scholars, and we shall have more and more of them."

"The Pope must be able to ride out with a thousand mules; there are four thousand clerks alone in the Chancery at Rome," answered Caracciolo.

The Cardinal sighed, and thoughtfully rubbed his long nose. His feeble mouth, under the watery blue eyes, stood open with an expression of cowardly indecision.

"I cannot pay the Emperor any taxes," he said plaintively, "if Doctor Luther accomplishes his purpose; for my castles would fall to ruin, and I should have to give up my gardens, baths, libraries and fountains. I cannot do that and it would damage the German nation; for if I must pay duty on the wine from my estates, as

laymen do, because Herr Luther wants to cut off all spiritual privileges, then my wine will no longer be cheaper, no one will buy it from me, and there will be peasants' revolts on my lands."

"That, Eminence, is why we must hold together."

The Cardinal sighed again; that was easily said, but was not Luther right on many points? He wrote a magnificent style, a style that would educate his countrymen until they were not inferior to the Italians. In one generation the Germans could no longer be despised by Rome; the German which the monk had printed in his books had brought together races which had hitherto hardly understood each other's speech; he now wanted the Mass and the Gospels to be done into German, which would weld the nation even closer. Latin, which the Cardinal hated, would disappear, but much that was unintelligible would disappear too, much that kept the people humble and at a distance. The tormented Cardinal sighed heavily.

Caracciolo, his black hair cropped short over the high forehead of his small head, laughed: "Why are you so cast down? Do you think this peasant ruffian will throw the world off its hinges?"

"It is well enough for you to speak; you are going away but I must stay here. Life here could easily become a hell."

"Life is a festival everywhere," retorted Caracciolo, "and it rests with you whether you will fashion it to a work of art, as you have done hitherto, or degrade it into dullness, as your barbarous countrymen do. Man

is here to enjoy the beauty of the earth. This life is all there is."

The Cardinal turned restlessly round, and then again towards the other. He felt that the Pope mistrusted him. "I regret our Holy Father's misfortunes," said the Hohenzollern, untruthfully, he spoke from nervousness and in doubt whether the German people would stand much more of Rome's impudent charlatany. "I regret the Emperor's move, which deprived us of the Spanish Inquisition."

"I am glad," answered Caracciolo, "that we gave it up."

The Hohenzollern stared. He had taken a wrong line, he must be more careful. The Pope's political Legate threw him a fresh crumb.

"I know that you are our friend."

The Cardinal's nose became longer, he smiled with nervous gratitude. What was the Pope's representative aiming at?

"The Spanish clergy were no longer completely in our control," explained Caracciolo, "they had been infected by this heretic's doctrines."

The Cardinal could not begin to understand how there could be any chance of destroying Luther, if his influence had already spread abroad.

"The revolt there gradually became a Spanish one, and would, sooner or later, have been turned against us. The Emperor is doing our work, if he secures the obedience of the Spanish monks. The first step is therefore taken towards an agreement between Rome

and your Emperor. It will be achieved when you have delivered up this poisonous heretic into our hands."

"I do what is in my power, Herr Nuncio, but I must be careful."

Caracciolo nodded, with an expression of soothing agreement. He was going forward step by step. The Hohenzollern breathed again.

"You know that the Elector of Saxony is not well disposed to me on account of the affair of Halberstadt; I cannot let the opinion get about that I have worked against his monk from feelings of personal spite."

"That I understand, Eminence."

Caracciolo looked at the other; and the Hohenzollern felt as though derisive fingers were pointing at his blinking eyes. Albrecht hurriedly turned to the marble head of Bacchus, crowned with grapes and vine leaves, that stood upon his table; Caracciolo's was the evil look of one who delights in torturing and tormenting, the true basilisk look, which can set fire to houses and reduce them to ashes.

"All the princes are against me," groaned the Hohenzollern. "They envy me my Vice-chancellorship because I am so young to be the senior Spiritual Elector. I have done what was possible against the heretic in my territories, but I must be very cautious."

"Nobody blames you for that," said Caracciolo, slowly, waiting for what was to come. The Hohenzollern still hesitated, and then ran into the snare that the other had spread for him.

"If I were the Perpetual Legate of Germany, then I could deal with Luther properly, but as things are—" and the sweat broke out on Albrecht's low boorish forehead—"I must be very careful."

"The Holy Father has forgotten that you voted against the French king at the imperial election. I have very encouraging advices in this connection from Rome."

"I am glad to hear it, for Herr Aleander has not always reported very truthfully to Rome about me and my proceedings."

"Aleander's a fool," answered Caracciolo, "but we must be fair to him, as his position is not an easy one. He must speak as a theologian—how can he produce much result? Moreover, he does not understand your Eminence's difficulties."

The Hohenzollern smiled with relief, and fixed himself finally into the trap.

"I cannot take any steps against Luther," he blurted out, "until I am appointed Perpetual Legate for the whole of Germany."

"Is your Eminence of the opinion that Rome should not have a voice in the domestic affairs of Germany?"

What was this?

Certainly not, thought the Hohenzollern, with a sudden access of courage: but then he could not, as Cardinal, be a lay Elector, and in that case his electoral revenues would disappear. But if he was only an Elector, he would lose the very considerable revenues from his episcopal estates. "As God is Lord over all,"

he answered, firmly, proud of his reply, which he was certain would meet with Caracciolo's approval, "therefore Rome's servants are lords over all, and consequently, over the domestic politics of any country."

"Does your Eminence stand well with the Great Chancellor Gattinara?"

The Hohenzollern nodded, breathlessly. What did the other want; where was all this leading? He had the sensation that a storm-cloud was hanging over him and coming nearer and nearer, while he waited crouching, to see where the first flash would fall.

"If our Holy Father were called away by God," said Caracciolo, "the Vice-Chancellor Medici would certainly be his successor."

"His Holiness is not ill?" asked Albrecht warmly, with a sympathetic forward movement of his body. He drew down the corners of his little mouth with an anxious air, and his eyes grew round and startled. The Vice-Chancellor did not love him, and would, if he were Pope, never appoint him Perpetual Legate.

"The fact that you are not, like the Elector of Brandenburg, on the side of France, will make Herr Gattinara more favorably disposed to you."

"What my brother does concerns me not."

"Precisely. You are a prince of our Holy Church. Was that why you refused your brother's offer to send troops for the destruction of heresy in your territories?"

This was a reproof. Did the Italian mean to convey to him the Pope's disfavor?

"I can do no otherwise, as Elector, so long as the

Emperor has made no decision, my dear Herr Caracciolo."

"Rome is not annoyed at this; the less so as you confirm your tie with the loyal Brandenburger by asking your Perpetual Legateship to be made hereditary in the House of Hohenzollern."

The Cardinal missed the point.

"As soon as you have brought Gattinara to condemn the traitor, you shall have the Hereditary Legateship."

The Cardinal of Mainz flushed with pleasure and greed; but then he realized that a display of energy was needed. Suddenly the prospect of this high office pleased him no longer. "Is Luther truly so dangerous?" He tried to draw back, and was frightened over the sudden alteration in Caracciolo's eyes, that were now like daggers. "Can one not let Mercy come before Justice?" concluded the Cardinal dejectedly. "For the sake of peace," he added, in utter hopelessness.

Caracciolo got up, as though he were throwing an invisible enemy aside. "We shall wait and see what you are able to do with Herr Gattinara."

Albrecht of Hohenzollern sprang in his alarm so hastily out of his padded chair, that he almost fell. "Dear friend," clasping the other's elbow beseechingly, "do me the honor to stay to supper. The Greek dancers are coming and I have ordered some good Italian music."

The faint murmur of music could be heard near by.

"I shall prepare my dispatches regarding the bestowal

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of your Hereditary Legateship. Praised be Jesus Christ!"

The Mainzer stared palely at the Nuncio. What a nuisance it was that one must do some service for every position! Take steps against Luther? When his Chancellor was on the monk's side? Could he never have any peace? Would they never let him be?

"Amen," he said belatedly, in the empty room.

CHAPTER X

“**D**O you think, friend,” said Brück, sitting in the Swan Inn, “that goodness and purity will truly always conquer in life?”

The Elector of Saxony’s lean confessor threw a shocked glance at the Chancellor, as he sat in his great white cloak. He thought he could not have heard aright. What sort of question was this?

Brück repeated it obstinately, with troubled eyes.

“You know,” said Spalatin, drawing his cloak tighter round his angular shoulders, as though he were freezing or wanted to hide his hands, “that I believe in God.”

“I, too, believe in God,” said Brück roughly and in great excitement. He stroked his beard with his right hand. “But you also know that the Savior died on the Cross.”

Spalatin was even more shocked than before. His lean face became as pale as marble and sank almost into vacancy; he looked like a dying man.

“Well,” said Brück, and raised his hand to his forehead, which grew suddenly flushed, while at the same time an icy shudder ran down his back and made him crouch and shrink, “if one has seen the wickedness of men and lived as long as I have to experience it—whether they be princes or knights, priests or laymen, if one considers all their brutality, their selfishness and

avarice, then one realizes that the man who stands against these things and has no part in such conduct, is alone—utterly alone and abandoned, whether in great affairs or in daily life; and therefore it seems to me to be madness to believe that Luther will conquer.”

Spalatin raised his face, with its thin nose, and turned it quickly aside, as though to shake off an invisible pall that had enveloped and was smothering him.

“God confuses the persecutors of purity, that he may deliver His own,” he answered, and hurriedly changed his tone, that had grown unctuous, because he had spoken before his feelings were roused. “Did not David strike down Goliath?”

This example did not satisfy Brück, as Spalatin saw; and the fear that beset and gripped him made him speak out of his heart.

“Think of the efforts that have been made against our poor monk,” said Spalatin, “and he is still here. Did he not overcome them all? Do you not see the power of God in that? A monk begins to write—many have done that already, but his writings go from mouth to mouth and raise a storm. Many swords have been drawn against him, but his pen has prevailed over them all. The might of Rome went forth against him, but when our Elector was frightened and threatened with the interdict, and began to waver, the old Emperor died. Did not the news arrive on that very night, a few hours before Luther intended to leave Wittenberg forever? Have you forgotten how joyously we unpacked his poor valise? Did not this allow his gospel

time to spread abroad? Did not Luther escape the murderers at Augsburg? Has not every dagger and every poisonous powder failed until now to achieve its end with him? Did not the poisoned glass fall to the ground in Heidelberg? Has he not always been saved from his apoplexies just in time by blood-letting? Have his epileptic fits ever weakened him in his work? Has not the Pope hitherto become entangled in his own intrigues, so that we may still continue to hope? In my opinion, dear friend," Frederic's confidant concluded with great solemnity, "God's hand has shown itself so visibly that we may not despair. We cannot judge of anything, and, therefore, we must have faith and leave everything to the Lord. He leads everything aright—that is what Luther has shown us, and that is what has made him so dear to us."

Brück kept his bearded head bowed; first he listened without moving, then nodded his agreement, and now the tears began to trickle down into his great broad chest and he fell to sobbing; then he burst out:

"But when one sees his enemies and what they are doing, how they are using all their money and power against him, a man must needs be cast down, and I cannot help asking myself if we are fools to trust heaven so much. Perhaps it is madness."

Spalatin looked into Brück's eyes which the latter had raised with a strange, sad, questioning expression as though longing to be refuted.

"We bear heaven within us," replied Spalatin; "and

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therefore we suffer; therefore, indeed, we suffer more than others."

Brück's eyes still looked troubled and doubtful; he was unconvinced. "Is that not presumption?"

"And even if it is madness," continued Spalatin in a firm voice, "then let it be so. For it is a madness that is not unbefitting. God would have it so or it would not be within us. We must be as he would have us."

Brück's anxious face above the narrow white collar of his shirt slowly lit up. Then he began to smile faintly and irresolutely; with a thoughtful air like a child that has cried out in the darkness and suddenly sees a light brought to him in his mother's protecting hand.

"You are right, you have understood our Doctor's meaning better than I; we will go on trusting in God."

CHAPTER XI

WITH a great deal of ceremony and much twisting and turning and inspection of his person, Herr von Schott got himself into his best clothes for the Duke of Brunswick's banquet. When he put on his silk doublet—blue, glaringly slashed with red—he said, by way of comforting the gloomy monk who had been crouching for hours with bent head on one of the chests standing against the wall:

"It is true that many people have come, wanting to see you, but the City Council has not sent to welcome you. They stayed away; that looks bad."

The little knight brushed his hair vigorously.

"Only unimportant people came, none of the princes or chancellors," his pomposity continually increasing in his new clothes. "You want us to tell you the truth, I suppose? And the truth is that your affairs look very bad indeed."

Songs and clatter rose from below from the much overcrowded dining room of the house. A repulsive, greasy smell of food came through the ill-closed doors that often banged and rattled when the toppers below crashed their fists down on the wine-stained wooden platters. A tallow candle burned fitfully on the common table at which they ate.

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Schott assiduously anointed his hair with some fragrant unguent, and carefully smoothed it down.

"There was no messenger from your Elector: that looks bad, very bad. But I know all the great lords, I will soon easily find out if judgment has been given against you." He solemnly draped his person in a green silk mantle. "I am only going out on your account," he said by way of an apology, "to find out whether you are to be examined."

Luther went on sitting with bent head.

The little knight's annoyance grew more and more acute. What sort of cretinous monk was this? What a wretched object he looked! The annoyance increased: how had he, Schott von Oberwindt, gone bail for him, described him to every one as a hero, as St. George, as the Dragon-slayer, as the Archangel Gabriel with the flaming sword. And now, the poor outcast crouched there in a state of pitiable cowardice. Didn't he know what he owed him; was he quite without consideration? Herr Schott sniffed with irritation as he smoothed his little beard. He must make a change of front and prepare for a retreat.

"I don't like this silence and cautiousness of the princes towards you. No, I don't like it at all." Schott adjusted his cap carefully with both hands on his hair, which he had carefully curled over his temples. He lifted the round candlestick and looked at himself. "You go and get some sleep," he said importantly over his shoulder. "That is the best thing you can do in your circumstances. Some of my servants are sleep-

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ing in the corridor. So long as you do not leave the house you need have no fear. So keep calm." With the candle still raised high above his head the little knight stood in the middle of the room, listening, with his back to Luther.

No answer came.

All he could hear was the clatter of the drinkers in the rooms below; shouts rose up from the streets, a flash of light from a lantern trembled on the beams of the low ceiling and then was suddenly extinguished; the two lantern-bearers had put out their lights by crashing them down on each other's heads. Schott turned round, looked angrily at the monk. But the monk did not notice.

He sat as before, motionless, and, as it seemed, without the slightest interest in anything. He was staring into the palms of his clasped hands. Was he so frightened as all that? Perhaps he had not even heard. Or was he already considering how he should recant?

"Are you praying?" asked Schott aloud, in a reproachful voice.

Luther impatiently shook his head; he raised his forehead in which deep furrows had appeared and were growing deeper, and asked in a low and anxious voice:

"Why is the man in the black leather doublet so melancholy?"

Schott stumbled over the heap of clothes that lay on the ground as he had taken them off, and he almost let fall the candle. The monk was mad; and how

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shocking he looked! There were loose bags of skin under his eyes which were red-rimmed as though from weeping. Did the man take him for a fool, that he tried to make him believe that he was thinking about this and nothing else?

Schott puffed out his lips and snorted in more than audible contempt. He gave a short conclusive whistle and turned away. It was hopeless, there was nothing he could do; once a priest, always a priest.

"Kriechingen is a nasty superstitious creature." Schott suddenly broke off in regret at his overhasty exposure of his friend. "I mean that he is not a bad sort of man, but he takes life too seriously."

The little knight hastily ran a hand down his calves.

Had the other noticed something?

Luther looked as before and sat staring at the ground in front of him. With combined feelings of curiosity, penitence and sympathy, Schott went up to him and, bending over him, said:

"Can I help you?"

Luther shook his bent head negatively. The little knight leaned down, and with an expression like that of a good Samaritan.

"I would gladly stay with you," he said impatiently. "But I must go to the banquet as I have to see about the letting of my grass meadows. Shall I send you up some wine?"

"Is your melancholy friend not coming home?"

Schott started back in irritation and again stood up

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straight in the center of the room; he was not to be fooled again.

"When his votive candles are burnt he will come home."

Luther nodded slowly and sympathetically as if he now knew everything.

"Be of good courage," said Schott comfortingly. He was itching to be at the wine, and was gradually becoming annoyed with himself. Why did he not simply go away? Why did he treat the coward with such consideration? "I will have a jug of beer sent up to you," said the little knight emphatically. "Drink it and then sleep; I will soon find out what they are going to do with you."

Schott looked round him despairingly, with a kind of nervous anger. Luther's impassivity and his further relapse into silence annoyed him more and more; they robbed him of his energy and the last remains of his decision. He fell into a rage. Luther made him feel unsafe. He longed to tear himself away and see the faces of human beings. It was certainly true that this monk was a mighty prophet.

"I would gladly spend the night talking to you," said Schott, loudly, indignant with himself for the sense of guilt that was in him. Why was it? Surely he was his own master? Luther was simply behaving badly. "There are many who do not go out because they owe too much in the taverns. Shall I send one of them up to you to keep you company?"

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"No, let me be," said Luther curtly. He raised himself.

"Very well," said Schott feebly; and he slipped carefully towards the door, for he was taken aback by Luther's sudden energy. Was this really the monk who stood so powerfully on his feet? His voice was strong, almost threatening, and certainly discourteous. "I know you have God for company."

Luther's brisk jerk of his head and the impatient set of his mouth were ominous.

Schott grasped his sword firmly by the hilt and thrust it so sharply backwards that it lifted up his cloak. As no answer came and Luther again stared at the ground, the little knight turned with a feeling of relief, and said "Farewell."

The flames of the tapers flickered and then burned steadily.

Footsteps died away into silence.

Luther moved slowly to the table and held a finger over the burning wick; his face was dark red, his teeth were firmly clenched, his face had sagged, and was full of hollows and angles like that of a dead man. With a heavy gasp he withdrew his finger and wetted it with his lips. He rubbed it clean and sat down on a chest with his back to the center of the room.

He gazed up through the window at the bright sky.

The stars glimmered like little points of silver behind the dull glass panes.

They looked down upon all men.

They had looked down upon all men in their distress.

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Jesus had seen the same stars when he was misunderstood and persecuted; they had shone over the Mount of Olives.

"You my beloved disciples."

Between the window and Luther began a dance of colored puppets. Tiny bright shapes like human beings moved in the air, like the little painted figures on a chime of bells. Manikins on horseback and on foot, with little swords and halberds, clad in silk or in peasant dress. They talked excitedly among each other and to Luther. Their mouths and little arms moved hastily up and down. They cried out, looked imploringly at him and at each other, and embraced. Then they all looked at him again.

Fear, doubt, mistrust and hope were written on their bearded, red-cheeked faces, and suddenly there appeared upon the scene their tiny wives and daughters and little children. Luther raised his hand. Slowly and with a heavy movement he effaced from his being the recollection of his journey. They vanished.

And now they were all sitting together and waiting.

With a suppressed shriek of fear as though a mass of rock was crashing down upon him, he flung himself to the ground. His hands were clasped and raised up high to Heaven as though they were tied by a cord that bound him to the stars.

"Father, I did not begin this," he began to pray, in a fervent passionate voice that came from the very depths of his being. "Thou knowest that it is Thy doing. I did not begin it; carry it to the end. I did

not will it. Thou hast urged and driven me, again and again Thou hast provoked me until I burst forth. Thou knowest how gladly I would have kept silence. It is Thy doing. Why should Thy business trouble me unless Thou wert not at hand? I am a worm. All is in Thy hands, not in mine. Thou gavest me the thoughts and the words that I wrote and spoke; it is Thy doing. Enter into me that Thy work may prosper."

He bowed his head in devotion over his folded hands.

"If I do not understand Thee aright, destroy me," he prayed, in a whisper now; "it matters not. If it is Thy will to take me, then do so; but see," he burst out wildly, with a fanatical and menacing flash of his eyes towards heaven, "when I would have yielded and said nothing, then Thou drivest me into the fight once more. Thou must know why Thou hast done this. Thou canst not leave Thy work unfinished."

He was now kneeling erect.

"Thou canst not desert Thy duty." Quickly he sank down again and crashed with his whole body on the floor. His knees, arms and hands ached from the pain of that contact; the bright white strip of light that faced him, and seemed like a broad path of moonlit cloud slanting up to heaven, glimmered and faded. Before his eyes were the lower part of a wall, a high window embrasure, small round panes, in which the stars of heaven were mirrored.

"In what book is your prayer found?"

Luther raised his head with a savage jerk and listened. Then he leaped up from the floor.

Something dim and colorless stood in the background.

He raised his fists, and with the delighted shout of a man lusting for battle he dashed upon the apparition.

But what met his onrush was something yielding and yet solid like a human chest.

"Why do you strike me? I only want to repeat your prayer, because my heart is so heavy."

Luther jerked up his fists; he carefully raised the palms of his hands and with a gesture of infinite contrition passed them over what stood before him.

Eye sockets, a head, hair, shoulders, heaving lungs; and beneath his hands throbbed an uneasy heart.

"Kriechingen?" cried Luther.

"Did you think I was a bailiff come to take you away? Our right reverend lords don't allow that."

"You must be the Devil!"

They sprang free from each other with a sudden start and listened. The crash and clatter of invisible breaking crockery met their ears, and a table was overturned. Shouts and shrieks shot up through the floor like pointed flames and filled the air about them.

"You bring confusion upon all men."

A mighty wave heaved up and uplifted Luther—the surge of an uncontrollable and mighty ocean.

Kriechingen made as though to escape, but Luther's voice rang out:

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"Stay! Take that!"

"O God!"

"Lie there and be still."

A heavy fall. There followed a faint, convulsive rustling of straw, then all was still.

When the doors were torn open and, with a torch blazing above their heads, a crowd of gayly colored figures tried to force their way into the room, with drawn swords in their hands, they started back in amazement, with a superstitious glare in their wide eyes. A white-clad giant stood before them. Tall, broad, with mysteriously flashing eyes.

Luther's face was dark and sanguine, as though hewn from reddish rock. There was a black glitter in his eyes like the stone that had lately fallen from heaven near Cologne.

Kriechingen lay with twisted limbs on the heap of straw; without a word or a movement he stared at the rest with agonized terror-struck eyes.

They crossed themselves, and asked with trembling voices: "What is it, Reverend Sir?"

"I struck the Devil on the mouth." They looked about them curiously, and then at each other, and drew closer together.

"Go," said Luther, "I will watch."

They did not understand.

"Go," said Kriechingen in a low tone of hoarse command.

With a sudden impulse they rushed at the door. They could be heard whispering, and then the most

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courageous of them set the door slightly ajar and peered in once more.

The heretical monk was pacing the room with long strides, both his fists pressed against his breast. He looked one of the savage caged beasts of heathendom that the jugglers exhibit by the Mint. His cowl bellied out behind him, and his sandals creaked. At last it grew dark. The knights' stumbling footsteps creaked away into the distance and disappeared into the dim depths of the house.

Luther stood still.

"Believe me," he said beseechingly, with panting breast, "Fear is the Devil. Only the Devil bids us fear."

"You nearly strangled me."

"I am not made for life, it makes me easily afraid, and then I grow angry. Tell me," said Luther, again in so sharp a tone that Kriechingen again drew back and half hid himself in the straw, "what is on your mind? I will put it from you."

"I may not."

"Is your sorrow of the outer or the inward man? Confess!" Dark and compelling, Luther's gaze burned into the other's eyes.

No confessor had ever spoken to Kriechingen like that.

"The Lord Archbishop of Mainz will not have you condemned unheard; he insists that you be heard."

Kriechingen's hand felt for the join of his doublet where it was laced across his chest: he clasped a scrap

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of bone of St. Agnes, which he wore as a protective amulet round his neck, and in the acquirement of which his last possession had disappeared.

"The most Reverend the Lord Nuncio Aleander has shown to certain Bavarian gentlemen a Bull of the Holy Father by which any prince who supports you is forbidden to enter a church or receive the Holy Sacrament."

Kriechingen felt Luther's eyes on him, and turned. "Do not destroy the happiness of Christendom," he whispered.

"Open your heart to me."

Full of fear, the crouching shaken man peered up at Luther. "You are under the Church's ban," he said tremblingly.

"Look on me as no more than a living being, as your dog, if that will make you speak more freely. Think you are alone with him in a wild forest. Tell him, your old friend of many a hunt, what burdens your mind."

"Do you not fear for your salvation?"

"Poor fool; why do you shuffle about our churches and burn all that wax made by our little German bees?"

"I cannot answer. You are excommunicate. You are no longer holy."

"Every Christian is holy. Answer me."

The knight's soul began to struggle despairingly with Luther's imperious look; and was defeated.

"An imperial edict has been drawn up that your followers are to be destroyed or driven out of Germany."

"The home of inward men is everywhere. It is written of them: 'What shall it profit a man

if he gainè the whole world and lose his own soul.' ”

“Where does that come?” The question was blurted out.

“In the Gospel that the Roman priests hide and falsify to enslave you.”

Kriechingen raised his hands in a gesture of tense horror. “Do not tempt me—I may not submit myself to you.”

“No Christian submits himself. You must rid yourself of all that foolish pantomime.”

“I may obey no one but the Pope, to whom I became subject through holy baptism.”

“No Christian is subject to any man.”

“Would you mock me?”

“You are subject to God alone.”

Kriechingen glanced at the taper. It was burning duskily with a reddish, crackling flame. But it seemed as though many candles had suddenly been kindled in the room; it was light, as though the sun had risen in the middle of the night.

The knight slowly turned his head and stared at the monk once more; the latter's eyes were immovably fixed on him.

Once more Kriechingen grasped the fragments of Saint Agnes; he knew who it was: the Devil could take a pleasant shape to destroy the souls of men.

“You must not do yourself a harm,” said Luther, “you must resign yourself to die.”

Kriechingen, with a weary hand, held up a cross in front of him.

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"Only if you die can you be born again and find the Kingdom of God, otherwise you will not. Die!"

Kriechingen let his hand fall and stiffened.

"It is fifteen hundred years since our Lord Jesus died upon the cross," said Luther, "and founded our Holy Catholic Church. You understand him no better than his murderers understood him. That is Rome's crime. Would you be subject to that Rome?"

"Tempt me not," cried Kriechingen. "I would be without sin."

"No man is without sin, no man can be truly good. None is good save God alone."

"Where is that said?"

"In the Gospel."

"You twist its meaning."

"Are you crushed?"

Kriechingen nodded.

"Are you like a toad over which a cart has passed?"

Kriechingen nodded.

"Do you trust yourself no more? Are you in the uttermost despair?"

Kriechingen nodded, and half raised himself.

"Do you realize that nothing earthly can help you?"

"Yes."

"Then bow down, for now you may be born again."

Slowly, and at last, Kriechingen let fall the amulet. After a while he said softly: "Tell me more; help me, I beseech you."

With a cry of joy Luther flung himself upon the knight and embraced him.

CHAPTER XII

THE Elector of Saxony also found no sleep. And the cause of this was not only the noise of the revelers, who kept up a continuous tumult in the dark streets, staggering and bumping into each other like intoxicated beetles, jostling and brawling in the darkness: it was his own mind that would not let him rest; it troubled and tormented him, and kept that mighty bulk rolling from side to side on the great bed.

Frederic had sent for his Fool. He was carrying on a strange conversation with the old hunchback who, arrayed in his gay motley, was sitting like an obsequious ghost in the gleam of the nightlight on the floor.

"Perhaps, Klaus, I had better present the Elector of Cologne with St. Elizabeth's toe?"

The Fool did not appear to take the matter seriously.

"Fiddlesticks!" he replied. "You will soon find a substitute for that; Elizabeth must have had ten toes, for she was a human being before Rome created her a saint!"

Frederic snorted his indignation: then he went on: "I have some other parts of her sacred skeleton."

"Give in exchange for Herr Doctor Luther the corpse of the Jewish child whom Herod strangled. It is profitable to exchange the living for the dead."

Frederic lay motionless. The child from Jerusalem

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was his most valued relic, from which he had great hopes for the salvation of his soul. "Do you think they will murder my monk?" he asked, after a while.

"Be not disquieted, your Grace. People look different in death from what they do in life. Has it never occurred to your Grace that your child from Jerusalem looks uncommonly like a Saxon?"

Once more there was silence in the great room with its many-vaulted ceiling: then a voice:

"I am afraid my monk will not get a fair hearing."

With a groan Frederic rolled over on his other side.

"He is too bold. Why did he preach on his way here in a place where he was turned out of our Church? He should not have done that."

"He has an authority which is above the papal authority."

The pearls of the rosary that Frederic had brought back from his pilgrimage to the Holy Land could be heard clicking. With an assiduous murmur, as though he were biting them, he drew the carved gems through his beard. "Enter that in my Justification Book: I have said five more paternosters."

Klaus limped to his feet, fetched from the table the great thick book with its gold stamped covers, and opened it. Kneeling down he wrote the five fresh paternosters into the Book of Justification: the book with its many pages and its ever lengthening columns was kept with the object of insuring eternal happiness for the Elector.

"How many paternosters are there now?" asked Frederic, anxiously, from his luxurious bed.

"One hundred and fifteen thousand one hundred and eighteen."

"And Ave Marias?"

"Two hundred and twenty thousand five hundred and ten. You will certainly get to heaven with that supply of prayers. The rosaries are fewer: the entries only come to eighty-five thousand one hundred and twelve."

"Put the book away," ordered Frederic, and the Fool obeyed. He sat down again beside his lord, until the electoral bed creaked once more. "My cousin George is a scoundrel. He wrote a letter of complaint to his Majesty the Emperor about the way the Holy See has been persecuting us. There is a great deal in it against my Martinus: they are very bitter about him."

"It is said in Holy Writ: 'The Princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant.'"

Frederic snorted helplessly. "That is true of me but not of the others. . . ."

"It would have been better if your Grace had saved the money you spent on collecting your holy fingers and bones and bits of wood and napkins. Money can do so much with the Diet of this glorious Empire. The Reverend the Lord Cardinal of Mainz took one hundred and three thousand ducats for his vote at the election of the Emperor. Your High and Mighty Lord

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cousin George got only sixty thousand, the Lord Elector of Brandenburg stood out for a bribe of ninety-seven thousand ducats. He is a very great lord indeed."

"Shut your dirty mouth, Klaus."

"The imperial paymasters have indeed observed that the German nation has an expensive Emperor, and the German nation must pay."

"I am not the Diet, I do not take bribes."

"I know, and therefore you have a freer hand."

"Perhaps, but I cannot work miracles."

"I should like to see a miracle like those in the Bible: not like the bread from Our Lord's Last Supper, the sponge from which He drank on the Cross, or even the hair of His beard, which is kept in your treasure chamber as though it had just been bought or cut off."

"Blaspheme not: it is guaranteed from Rome that these are holy and wonder-working things."

"Is it not strange that the Virgin Mother's milk that is kept in your castle chapel at Wittenberg has kept so long? Are you sure that the hay and straw on which the Lord Jesus lay in His crib was not eaten up by some donkey or other?"

"You really believe nothing now, Klaus: you are no longer a Christian." Frederic turned his broad back and massive hindquarters towards his Fool. Only these and the nightcap on his bullet-like skull could now be seen.

Klaus went on unmoved, as old people will. "Why should I not believe in miracles, when the exhibition of your collection every thousand days confers an in-

dulgence for all sins, and in spite of that, the very same pilgrims come back the following year and bring more money to your coffers."

Frederic flung round in bed with a violent jerk and sat up angrily. And, conscience-stricken and perturbed, he asked: "Has my Martinus said anything against it?"

"On the day before the exhibition of your relics he posted up his attacks against the indulgence swindle on the door of your castle church at Wittenberg: otherwise he has said nothing against it."

Frederic dropped back on the pillow. "At that time Martinus was still a young hot-headed doctor, and that is why I did not punish him."

"That will help your Electoral Highness in heaven more than all your relics."

"How does he look?" asked Frederic and kept his voice in check, gazing as indifferently as he could up at the vaulted roof of his room.

"Who, your Highness?"

Frederic jerked his foot impatiently in bed: "Trouble me not, Fool; I mean Martinus."

"Your Grace has had time enough to see him. I would, with due respect, suggest that he looks about as obstinate as your Grace. He knows what he wants."

"It is easy for you to talk." Indignant and self-reproachful, Frederic peered over his beard that lay spread out over the coverlet in front of him. "You are not beset by spies as I am."

"Shall I tell Martinus that?"

Frederic rolled his head over on the pillow in token

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of a negation. "I want nothing, except that the truth may be brought to light; I have no other will. I do but hope that God may not give these paltry red hats from Rome the victory if they are in error."

"In that case your Grace is at one with Herr Luther: that is what he wants likewise."

"Now, perhaps, I shall sleep." Frederic pulled the coverlet over his beard, and his words now began to come slowly, as though from somewhere in the region of his vast belly. "I should be glad if the Herr Doctor would make a cautious reply in the Reichstag—and not destroy all the bridges behind him. My brother of the Pfalz is of the same opinion."

"He sold his vote for the Emperor for one hundred and thirty-nine thousand gulden."

The Fool got up: he had understood. He approached his master's bed with strange swinging movements, raised his hands and pulled out the long asses' ears of his fool's cap.

"My ears will see to it."

"Take them for a walk."

"Sleep, most High, Mighty and truly German Prince."

CHAPTER XIII

GATTINARA turned hastily in his bed: he was not alone.

It was after midnight: the city men-at-arms were clearing the dance-hall with much tumult because the gentlemen from Burgundy were behaving too lewdly—the public women would not endure to be stood upon their heads and filled with iced wine, and gagged sometimes by these distinguished foreigners so that they should not shriek.

With an intent and listening expression on his face, Gattinara looked across the room to the barred door.

Again he heard the secret knock.

“Yes, what is it?” cried the Great Chancellor, sharply: “What is the matter?” And he heaved himself up in the silk coverlets and pillows.

Claudia got peevishly out of the bed with its great overhanging baldachin. The Colmar Ambassador’s wife then shamelessly bent over Gattinara and with bared teeth bit into her lover’s muscular neck. She made little impression on that athletic form and he shook her off. He got up and hastily thrust his feet into his fur-lined slippers. Looking at the door he briskly flung his cloak round him. “Go into the next room.”

With an injured air, proudly and consciously dis-

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playing her full rounded breasts, she swept from the room. She recalled a lovely female animal, with her great lascivious muscles, curved and powerful, yet yielding, like those of a Flanders mare. Again the little knocker gave a muffled rattle on the door.

Gattinara opened it.

The servant, with downcast eyes, whispered respectfully:

"His Excellency the Grand Chamberlain Chièvres asks your Grace's pardon for disturbing your Grace so late, but the matter is one of imperative urgency."

"My friend Chièvres is heartily welcome at every hour that Almighty God may allow me."

The servant stood deferentially aside, and the agitated form of the Emperor's former tutor limped into the room.

"I cannot help it, my most valued friend," Chièvres began, and gratefully patted the other's great hand as it pushed an armchair up to the hearth on which a wood fire was glowing: "Sleep eludes me on account of the French marriage project: and I have had a new idea on the subject."

Gattinara stroked his oily black hair, now completely disordered, and smoothed it down onto his head. He sank into a chair and shut his eyes. "Let me hear."

"I do not share in, as you know, but I understand, your antipathy to the King of France," began Chièvres cautiously, and looked with envy and dislike at his enemy's vigorous hairy chest, exposed by the fur man-

tle. "Your antipathy, my lord, seems more and more justified every day, as I am compelled to admit."

"What is the Emperor doing now?" asked Gattinara, curtly, without opening his eyes.

"Our dear young master is asleep."

"Say on."

"France wishes us no good," went on Chièvres in his quavering voice, but by a great effort he controlled his features, as he did not trust Gattinara's hooded eyes: "he feels himself too strong in his alliance with Rome. A proof of this was the tardy dispatch of a subordinate palace official to our Diet."

"And my publication of the edict against the heretic confirmed your knowledge," put in Gattinara.

"We shall not be able to bring France and the Holy Father over to our side," continued Chièvres in a hollow voice—he was unaccountably troubled by the sight of a woman's bracelet inlaid with enamel that lay glittering on a small table: "and indeed, there would be little sense in winning over both of them."

Gattinara nodded curtly with closed eyes. Chièvres shifted uneasily in his chair: he felt the other's intent and listening expression as a kind of insult.

"If we do not burn the heretic, the Pope will be openly and forever against us," pursued Chièvres, and secretly clenched his fists in order not to burst out in his irritation: "but this we cannot tolerate in view of the danger to our Italian possessions."

Gattinara sat motionless with meditative eyelids: Chièvres quickly turned his head; the sinews of his

throat and gullet looked revoltingly naked against his lean, yellow-skinned neck, and, half rising out of his chair, he looked at the bed. The pillows showed the impression of two heads, or the back of one head that had tossed from side to side.

"And therefore," said the Emperor's former tutor quickly, and almost noiselessly, settling himself in his former position, so that his voice did not alter in tone, "the heretic must be burnt."

Gattinara raised his eyelids very slightly: his eyes remained contemptuously lurking beneath them.

"As soon as the Pope is won over to our side," went on Chièvres, trembling as he spoke, "our French marriage alliance will be untenable. I, therefore, beg you, my dear Chancellor, to treat of it to-morrow in very vague terms."

"Certainly."

"I would also beg you to work in concurrence with me if I draft the treaty in such a way that I could break it at any moment."

"Until now we have arranged six marriage alliances for the Emperor," replied Gattinara's thick voice; "and we have made money out of all of them to pay the interest on the debts incurred over the Emperor's election. We will improve the English offer by putting up the French project: England will then have to offer more money than she has done yet."

"I am glad to leave an intellect like yours at the service of my dear young imperial master when I leave this mortal scene."

"And then?"

"The Pope can only be won if we hand the heretic over to him: so we must prevent the man recanting. With Rome's money, war against France is possible." Chièvres was silent; his gaze had caught a woman's vest hastily flung down by the bed.

Gattinara opened his eyes and took over the interview.

"We must overthrow France in the west and in her Italian possessions, and for that purpose we need German troops and German money. But the estates will only give us both if we make an appearance of wishing to suppress the Pope's exactions in this country."

Chièvres listened very humbly and apologetically and nodded. Gattinara's meditative, twinkling gaze forced down the drooping, vicious old eyes of the other man. They ached as he kept lasciviously peering at the woman's vest by his bed.

"It is high time to provide the Emperor with an experienced mistress," concluded Gattinara, in a hectoring tone to recall the other to himself; and, indeed, Chièvres started and pulled himself together. "He must try and acquire a clear head for government business; he is too weak."

Chièvres sat like one turned to stone.

"If we are to persuade the Germans to give us money," went on Gattinara, with great lucidity, "we must accede to their wishes; and the heretic, accordingly, must be heard."

Chièvres threw both his hands up in terror.

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"He must be heard," pursued Gattinara, "and yet not be heard. I will appoint a sham commission to deal with the Roman encroachments. In that way I shall show goodwill, keep my hands free, and Rome will again be nervous, which is most important of all. We have got the Spanish Inquisition—if I had kept back the edict against Luther any further, we should not have got it."

Anxiety and impotent fury were inextricably mingled in Chièvres' weary expression. His enemy made his dispositions quite autocratically, as he himself used to do in the days of his youth, and pointed out his own mistakes. He hated him: it was pitiful to have to give in because he could no longer grasp a situation.

"Who will examine the monk?" asked Gattinara, in his harsh, hectoring tone.

"The man who had the heretic's books burnt in the Rhineland is a member of the Diet," answered Chièvres, tremblingly, not daring to look at the other's face. "Moreover, he is Treasurer of the Lord Archbishop of Trier."

"I understand."

"The Lord Archbishop of Trier," went on Chièvres, in his pedantic prolixity, "is a friend of the Saxon Elector."

"I understand, I understand," replied Gattinara, irritably. "Your plan is good; I agree with it."

Chièvres sank into a state of lassitude. The perfume with which the air of the room was overcharged, made him feel melancholy and weak. It was a pity that all

would soon be over forever. The imperial tutor used the remains of his powers of resistance not to look openly at the woman's vest: old men often gained strength from a young woman, said the doctors. Chièvres began to speak, but his words trickled out slowly and uncertainly; they were barely coherent.

"Let me finish," Gattinara insisted. "To get this insolent dog Aleander and this cunning brute Caracciolo to report favorably to Rome, the Trier Treasurer must agree with Aleander the questions to be asked at the heretic's examination. Is that what you meant to say?"

"Yes," said Chièvres, with gloomy relief. "Then that is all. I undertake to see that the English shall hear of the signature of the French marriage treaty."

"And then?"

Chièvres closed his eyes. Did Gattinara dare to dismiss him? But a cheerfully obstinate determination not to obey, not to understand, not to be at his enemy's disposal, and a kind of hatred that induced him to delay as long as possible Gattinara's return to his female companion, held him fast. Chièvres did not move from his chair.

With whom was Gattinara sleeping that night? He must find out: anything might be a weapon in case of need.

Gattinara got up.

"I thank you with all my heart," quavered Chièvres through his broken teeth, and stood up unsteadily. "I ask your pardon for having disturbed your night's rest."

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He bowed his withered head and disappeared without another word, slipping and stumbling in his shapeless night shoes.

Gattinara looked after him and called, "Claudia!"

She came with head thrust forward, burst eagerly out of the study and sprang up at him exultingly with a gurgling cry like a sleek wild animal.

The Great Chancellor dashed his free hand at the taper flame. It went out.

CHAPTER XIV

THERE was a continual crackle of harquebus fire from the walls into the dim mist. And in the gardens, where the poor people's tenements adjoined the walls, dark gliding figures appeared in secret counsel and conspiracy.

Not until the dawn had nearly broken was all quiet.

So the noise of Herr Schott's return home was all the greater. A spell seemed to have been cast upon the house in the night. The staircase was steeper, and the edges of the wooden steps had become as hard as iron and very ill-disposed. They seemed to tempt a man to disaster.

The door was bewitched; it would not open, it was frozen to the door posts: and when a man pulled at it with all his might it opened backwards. And the room behind was full of smoke. Had they burnt the monk already?

The little knight cautiously held on to the door. He then leaned backwards and called downstairs in the darkness.

"Come up: they've burnt him."

When he tried to seize the pretty lady's groping hand, he caught sight of the monk and Kriechingen.

He gaped at them in horror.

"What are you doing with your clothes on?" They

were sitting peacefully down beside each other on the straw pallet and holding each other's hands like a pair of lovers: and they looked at him as though he did not belong there.

But he did! There was his helmet hanging up with his coat of arms.

"Are you drunk too?" asked Herr von Oberwindt.

He covered his eyes with his hand, assumed a weary expression and yawned. On one side of his head the hair was bristling on end; he looked as though he had been carousing at a student's party.

"Turn your eyes away, monk." He raised his right foot and felt behind him, once, twice, until he could feel nothing yielding. Then he sprang vigorously into the room and slammed the doors between himself and the harlot.

There were a few knocks, a burst of abuse on either side, and then silence.

Schott dropped exhausted on to a chair and stuttered out: "You agree that priests ought to marry, do you not?" He burst out laughing, hammered on his knees with his fists in an ecstasy of laughter. Then he grew solemn. Every one had spoken so highly of Luther that evening. They had said that he was unanswerable.

"Doctor, we did our best for you, we went round to all the Romans' lodgings and shouted *pereat* three times." The wine he had drunk gave him a sour, choking sensation. "Kriechingen," he shouted, as though he were stifling, and must get air at all costs if he were not to burst, "did you hear?"

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He sank back, burst again into laughter, and hammered on the floor with outstretched heels. The hilt of his sword rasped uncomfortably against his chin and lay like a gigantic cross against his wine-stained chest.

"We made the servants shout: '*Suave qui peut*, the Pope is in danger!' It was an expensive night. Herr Aleander could not sleep; and now others are shouting."

Suddenly a serious expression came into his face, and he sat stiff and motionless. He passed his sleeve, still muddy from a fall, slowly and confusedly over his head, from which the cap had disappeared.

"Poor Gengenbach and two Dutchmen were killed. The priests' wine is too strong. Peace to their ashes."

He crawled painfully to his feet.

"I must pray."

He knelt down and began, swaying from side to side.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, in heaven as on earth."

He stopped; a sudden apparition stood before him. Broader than it was tall, clad in a green and yellow check jerkin, with a large, brightly colored head and long tinkling ears. He wondered if the others saw it too.

The ears grew longer; large, watery, searching pig's eyes looked at him from under light-colored bristly brows; they were like the eyes of a Hungarian sow. Schott screamed. The pig spoke: "Does the Imperial Councilor Spalatin live here?"

Schott carefully laid the palm of his right hand on the ground so that his inward disorder should not en-

tirely upset his balance. Then he turned to the others and stared at them earnestly.

Luther and Kriechingen were sitting in the same attitude, like a pair of lovers.

"Do you see the pig too?"

As no one uttered a word, Schott yelled in the extremity of fear, "Kriechingen, do you see the pig?"

"Be quiet."

"You . . . see . . . it . . . too? There you are; I'm not drunk."

"I would have gladly asked the Imperial Councilor Spalatin, if he were here," said Frederic's Fool, as if he did not recognize Luther; "whether he were of the same opinion as our Lord Elector. He is sadly afraid that his university will soon be no longer what it was if its best teachers are to be burnt. But I see Herr Spalatin does not live here."

"He has something to say to you," whispered Kriechingen.

"I am of the opinion," went on the Fool, and fixed his gaze on Schott, who grinned with nervous obsequiousness, "that our Elector is wrong. He thinks the most important thing is to gain time."

"My name is not Spalatin," squeaked Schott, now angry.

"The Diet wants to deprive the Church of the spiritual courts; how if the Pope agrees, and asks for the heretic to be delivered up in return?"

"Shut your mouth," muttered Schott and folded his hands again. "You're drunk too; all drunk."

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Kriechingen glanced several times anxiously from the Fool to Luther and back again. Luther's face was immovable.

"So my advice would be, Herr Spalatin," said Klaus, making a couple of leaps in the air; "that Herr Luther should not delay any longer; it is too dangerous."

The Fool spun round twice quickly on his axis and sprang on one side. Then he spoke in an altered voice, in which Luther easily recognized an imitation of the voice of Spalatin, addressing the place where he had been standing.

"You are a fool, Klaus; if our Lord Elector desires that Luther should give an evasive answer so as to delay the judgment, the Lord Elector knows his own intentions."

"To that I should reply, Herr Spalatin," answered Klaus, in his natural voice, hopping into his previous place, and speaking in the supposed direction of Spalatin, "every one in the Diet thinks of himself and speaks to his own advantage. But a man who, like Herr Luther, does not seek his own advantage, but the advantage of others, cannot equivocate, he can only take the straight way. I should say to Herr Luther, if I saw him: 'If you play for time, you will lose much support and in the meanwhile the Emperor will get what he wants and desert you.'"

Again the Fool leaped into the air, again he spun round twice, tinkling his waggish bells, and again he mimicked the voice of the Electoral Councilor.

"The Lord Elector sleeps."

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"As usual," cried Frederic's Fool contemptuously and rushed up to Luther. "Trust yourself!" he cried. "Listen to no one! Germany awaits the deed."

And with a defiant gaze, full of eager passion, the Fool glared into Luther's eyes.

"How will you answer? Will you defy the Lords of Darkness? That is what German Christendom expects."

With slow determination Luther nodded. The Fool straightened himself, as though a great effort was over.

"Your answer must be short, for you will only be asked whether you recant or not."

Luther, the upper part of his body stiffly erect, looked at the Fool with a glance of penetrating comprehension; his arched brows were thrust powerfully forward, and his chin was firm, and full of strength and resolve.

"That is why you were summoned."

Luther's face grew more and more tense, his eyes glittered so that it was hardly possible to fix one's gaze upon them.

"You will only be able to answer 'Yes' or 'No': you will be forbidden to say anything else."

Luther raised himself. "Thank the Lord Elector," he said, "and inform him that I shall not take my hand from the work I have begun."

This was too much for Schott. They were talking like lunatics. He wrapped himself in his green mantle, suddenly collapsed and vomited on the floor.

The old Fool came nearer. He bent down and respectfully kissed Luther's hand, who snatched it away.

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"I beg you, no," he said hastily.

Klaus laughed loud and joyfully, twisted round twice with a swing and a flourish, twice leaped in the air, gave another swirling spin, and was gone.

In the twilight of the rising day, as he lay on the floor he had so disgracefully sullied, Herr Schott von Oberwindt began to blow the air in great blasts out of his nostrils. It was hard work, for the air always came back. A faint illumination filled the windows; and far below two amorous cats bade farewell to each other with much spitting.

In the streets the itinerant monks began to cry out:

"Give us bread, give us money, that we may do good works and you may save your souls. Every gift of alms is a stage on the road to heaven."

Cocks crowed, the cattle in the stalls began to stir and pull at their chains, the horses sprang up and clattered with their hoofs on the hard floors of their stalls; the day of decision was at hand.

CHAPTER XV

THE young Emperor had got up to say his morning prayers. The sun of the new spring day shone peacefully through the tall window down onto Karl's pale face.

He knelt before his private altar and began his thanksgiving prayer for his awakening once again out of the death of the now departed night. Then he added a petition for the salvation of his mad mother in Spain; for his frivolous dead father, Burgundy, whose coffin his poor half-witted mother so assiduously watched; and for his prodigal grandfather, his predecessor, who was moldering in Austria.

With a deep inclination, the young Emperor kissed the wooden image of the Savior, which he held clutched in his thin, bloodless fingers.

Chièvres was also kneeling: and he, too, was saying a morning prayer, but while his steady, monotonous whisper faintly echoed through the room, his red-rimmed eyes were anxiously observing the Regent of Christendom here below.

The frail youth with his pock-marked face was crossing himself again and again, and bowing more and more deeply before the image of Mary. Passionately and with pallid lips, he muttered his prayers, sometimes bursting into shrill entreaty.

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With an appraising eye, Chièvres marked his narrow, sloping shoulders, as they bowed more and more humbly before the image.

Karl raised his thin arms, stretched them out imploringly to the painted image of God's Mother on its gold ground, and cried out in fanatical passion.

"Mary Mother; Savior and God of Mercy, Lord of Our Holy Catholic Church, on which Thou art enthroned above us, let me not depart from the way of righteousness. Shed Thy light upon me. Give me strength to protect Thy Holy Roman Catholic Faith, to the salvation of all Christian souls, so that they may not fall into damnation. I will put all my Empire, all my friends, my body, blood, life and soul at the disposal of Thy Vice-Regent at Rome, and they shall be his; I will be obedient to him, and prevent any further corruption or heresy entering into the minds of Christians, so that our Holy Catholic Faith, which alone delivers me from Hell, may not be diminished. Let me not be found guilty before the divine throne of Thy Last Judgment.

"I know, too well I know," cried Karl more loudly, and beat his breast more vigorously: "I know that I am a sinful earthworm, that I am naught beside Thy Holy Pope, Thy Bishops, and all the sons of Heaven whom Thou dost fill with Thy Divine mercy and enlightenment. . . ."

He was silent; then he bent his head even more deeply than before. Was this a messenger from heaven? Once again he felt the touch, highly respect-

ful but quite determined, of his former tutor's warning finger. Slowly Karl turned his head, and looked up diffidently at Chièvres, who had risen and was standing at his side.

"What is it, Father?"

"Your Majesty should not forget the Holy Father is at present persecuted by wicked men."

With pendulous lower lip, irresolute and only half understanding, Karl looked at his teacher in mild hostility.

"Your Majesty must help the Holy Father to win back his subjects' love."

The ambitious boy's face flushed. Confident once more, he said, stiffly and with a certain reserve that withheld a final decision:

"I will hear you."

"Your Imperial Majesty needs no counsel; your Majesty knows everything, for you are continually enlightened by God."

Karl smiled faintly and his pendulous lower lip still looked watchful.

Chièvres stroked his former pupil's thin brown hair; Karl was grateful for the familiar act, but he strove against what he felt was weakness, and drew aside.

"I have an important request, your Majesty. The granting of this request by your Majesty would fill me with the greatest satisfaction."

Karl raised himself with a swift, little movement. His little eyes flashed. His hand quickly wiped away

the saliva that began to trickle down his overhung chin.

"Speak."

Chièvres bent his small head and grasped the youth's chilly fingers in both his own. He raised them to his lips and kissed them warmly.

"I beg your Majesty's attention to the French marriage scheme. The illness of my nephew, the Lord Archbishop of Toledo, has grown worse."

"I trust you, my dear Father, in all these matters."

"If my nephew dies, your Majesty, the Chapter of Toledo will choose as his successor the Bishop of Acuna—who is hostile to us. If this election is confirmed by the Pope then, in spite of the Inquisition, there will never be peace in Spain."

"And you think that will have an ill effect on the princes of this country?"

"I do think so; a world-monarchy has no worse enemy than national revolutions."

Chièvres raised a warning forefinger, as he had often done to his pupil in the dreadful loneliness of his orphan youth.

"God sent His Son to all the peoples of the earth, your Majesty; wherefore priests who only wish to serve their own peoples, like Luther and the Bishop of Acuna, are working against God's commandments."

Karl crossed himself on the breast and forehead in token of agreement: his hollow, listening face grew harder.

"The Holy Father will soon be convinced," he answered, when he saw that the President of his Council

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was not disposed to say any more, until he had declared himself more exactly, "that I am a true son of our Holy Roman Catholic Church."

"The Holy Father knows that, your Majesty."

Karl looked at his former tutor inquiringly.

"Have you written to him?"

"So it please your Majesty, yes."

Karl stroked Chièvres' withered hand, his weakly smiling face gazing into the glorious future he so ardently desired.

"Whom do you propose as your nephew's successor?"

"If your Majesty first disposes of the German heretic, then we are assured of the Pope's assent to a successor to my nephew who will be agreeable to us."

"Then you wrote to the Pope that I would first have this Luthro, or whatever he is called, executed?"

"That *if* Your Majesty were to . . ." amended Chièvres.

Karl flushed at this correction, which betrayed that he was hardly yet a diplomat.

"I thank you," he replied. "I understand. I thank you, my dear Father, you have acted well on my behalf."

"And, therefore, until we receive the Pope's agreement, your Majesty must give the French marriage project your serious consideration."

"Is your nephew dead?" asked Karl bluntly.

Chièvres nodded his white head in assent.

"The Lord God took him ten days ago."

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With the sympathetic impulse of youth, Karl gripped his former tutor by the arm.

"My Moorish doctor kept the room shut against every one," said Chièvres reassuringly. "And the corpse is prepared. But I earnestly beg your Majesty not to let Glapion or Gattinara or the nuncios know anything about it."

The young Emperor's face and expression again grew suspicious. "Otherwise there will be war with France and the Pope."

Karl paled, and stared at the floor, pondering the matter with sunken eyes. He was afraid; a dreadful abyss yawned in front of him, a black abyss with red, reeking walls, down which blood trickled slowly and hung in clotted gouts.

In something like collapse, he let himself drop on his knees, and hid his face in the robe of his Councilor, who set him so inexorably on his appointed way.

"You watch over me like a father and a mother."

Karl burst out sobbing; he saw his ultimate desolation; he saw life—the mysterious force that drives men on, and his own power. Any moment he might be called away, he might have to depart in the midst of his sins and answer God's summons.

"Will your Majesty look at me?" asked Chièvres.

Karl raised his head shyly and gazed reluctantly, yet with set purpose, into the troubled eyes of his former tutor, who stood by, bending down in his white robe and carefully tempting him to evil like a crook-backed witch.

"How glad I should be that I still have you," whispered Karl vacantly, "and that I am not yet abandoned by every one."

Chièvres filled his wheezy lungs full of air, strained his voice to its utmost resonance, and observed:

"No Christian prince, your Majesty, is abandoned, if he has the mightiest and most decisive ally whom he can and must win, if he would rule the world. Your Majesty must force the Pope to come in on our side."

Karl got up with a cat-like litheness, and imperiously indicated the bell rope.

Chièvres obeyed.

"I shall excuse myself, your Majesty," he said across the bent backs of the pages, who had suddenly sprung as if by magic from the ground, and, dressed in the imperial colors, stood motionless in the room. "I shall go and open negotiations with the gentlemen of France."

Karl nodded assent; his mouth was drawn and pensive; he had lost confidence. He raised his arms.

The pages sprang forward.

With sleepless eyes, broad imperious lips tightly compressed, and swollen nostrils, sat Aleander intently weighing the report on the events of the night.

"The Spanish princes sent a memorandum to the Great Chancellor Gattinara requesting that the Emperor should travel to Spain at once and deal with the situation there."

Aleander made no sign. The imperial doorkeeper,

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with his small round cap in his hand, went on with his report.

"The barber of the Lord Archbishop of Bremen thinks that the Emperor cannot travel until the Diet is over, as he might otherwise lose Germany."

Aleander made no observation on the opinion of the archiepiscopal barber.

"The Estates of Flanders are very ill disposed to the Emperor, as I was informed by a clerk of the King of Denmark, in return for fifty ducats—because the Emperor is delaying so long before having Doctor Luther burned. They think that the Emperor has asked the Pope to pardon Herr Luther."

The doorkeeper was silent.

"Is there news from the taverns?" asked Aleander. He bent his head as though he had already arrived at his decision and examined his finger nails. Then he raised his hands and rubbed his cheeks with them.

"What went on at the Goat Tavern?"

"The lords from Stauffen and the envoys from Dantzic and Hamburg drank to the death of the Holy Father."

"You are mistaken." And as Aleander looked at his polished finger nails, he saw a small, neat, carefully laid pyre, and amid the licking flames, Luther struggling, bound naked to a stake; the body of the monk changed color, swelled to a great blister, fell through the flames on to the iron grid, and charred into a motionless black object.

"The lords from Basel and Geneva, together with

Herr Philip of Brunswick, will to-day present Herr Luther with a jug of Embeck beer; I heard that from a servant of the Bishop of Brixen who is going also to the ceremony."

Aleander drew a deep breath. The long delayed trumpet-call of the Imperial Herald, summoning the members of the Diet, rang out in the street.

"Give me my fifty ducats. I must go back to the Palace."

"You have told me nothing new."

The imperial doorkeeper hunched his shoulders and half closed his eyes; his mouth was wide open. "New?" he asked. "God forbid!" And as Aleander looked him in the face, to make him fall back to his proper distance, he said, "Of course, all I tell your Grace is rubbish."

Aleander paced up and down, and he mastered his anger. "Go to Holy Confession," he said, "and purge yourself."

The doorkeeper ducked his bull-like shoulders with a sudden movement, and buried his face in his great hairy hands, as though he could only keep himself in hand if he could not see the Legate's face.

"I know," he said after a while in a muffled voice, "that you will not give me any money because our Savior, who died for us all upon the Cross, despised mammon."

"I cannot give you a certificate of indulgence for your sins," pursued Aleander, "as you have not told me everything."

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"And what have I not told you?" asked the doorkeeper, in a suppressed voice, without changing his position.

"The Lord Elector of Bohemia intends to depart."

The doorkeeper again showed his face. His mouth was like a half-circle with the curve below, and his lips were open as though to cry out.

"In future I shall not forget to mention that the latrine-cleaners in the palace come in and go out."

"Are you mad?"

"I was anxious not to trouble your Grace with the news about Bohemia, because the Bohemians have burnt two heretics and broken the imperial safe-conduct."

"Go to confession at once."

"Confession is no help, most High Lord," replied the porter, and straddled his short, sturdy legs apart like a bull-baiter awaiting the onrush of his enemy, ready to hurl him to the ground with all his strength; "for if it was, why should you have to follow it with your certificates of indulgence? If there were anything in them I should long ago have been a saint. Our Lord Jesus can't have died for all sinners, or we should not have to be always confessing so that you might find out what you wanted."

"Have the Saxons been bribing you?" cried Aleander.

"Our Lord Jesus died for them on the Cross," returned the porter, unbuttoning his shirt sleeve above his vast right hand, pushed it right up his arm with an ominous movement, stroked his stomach like a man awaiting a succulent meal, then moistened his great hand

and smacked it against his lips. There was an evil look in his eyes. "Herr Luther may be a heretic," said the porter, speaking very slowly; "but he despises mammon more than you and more than all other holy men." The porter's voice grew dark. "He is so poor that he could never pay his reckoning on his journey here, so I was told by his driver."

"On your knees!" cried Aleander.

"The Lords of Hutten and Sickingen have taken me into their service, and they will be glad if you do me any harm; they only want an excuse to attack you and other Romans."

Aleander suppressed his fury at the insult, and he mastered his feelings. He raised his pectoral cross on its long chain.

"The blessing of Almighty God be with thee. I forgive thee. Blessed be those whom men revile and falsely accuse of evil for my sake. Go; I forgive thee."

The porter stood as though paralyzed. Aleander did not move and held the cross steady. Deliberately and regretfully the doorkeeper drew the sleeve down over his brawny arm.

"For the Cross of our dear Lord that you hold in your hand, I will spare you," said he, shaking his fist menacingly; "but you have hounded to his death the old man whom you robbed of the room in which you sit: that I will never forget. If I ever come upon you alone and without your lackeys at your door, I'll crack your skull and send you to the hell where you belong."

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The doorkeeper went off with heavy tread and shut the door behind him with a crash.

Aleander closed his eyes. His heart rose up within him and seemed to fill his body; he staggered.

This was Luther's doing.

The mob had begun to think.

The innocent spring sunshine shone ever warmer in the cobbled streets, and the shadows of the night narrowed. The rats fled to the alleys which the sun had not yet reached. There they sat, peevishly, in squalid huddled groups, and waited.

The sun was like a cat that pursued them.

Further and further the rats retreated, and ever smaller grew their sanctuaries; the sun would not let them rest.

From every house people emerged; they began to parade the streets which had never seemed so populous. The rats scuttled off before them in startled hordes, dashed into the mill-races, into the drains of the bath-houses, and into the latrines. They disappeared into holes and manure heaps that swallowed up their little slippery tails.

From every side came the clatter of horses' hoofs. The knights' chargers and hackneys were being exercised by their servants and squires. Groups of horse-men in heavy armor, steel-glittering and flashing in the sunlight, were solemnly riding forth to the tourney. With gloomy looks and wrinkled foreheads the Lodging Commission wandered beneath the pointed gables and under the arcades. New quarters had continually

to be made available; the membership of the Diet had lately been enlarged. With many a sigh the Councillors in their voluminous black cloaks wrote names with chalk upon the doors; the Imperial Commissary was in charge and the citizens of Worms watched the proceedings with interest. As soon as the Commission had turned their backs, the names of the papal adherents were rubbed out.

Every corner, every attic was occupied many times over. Five, six, and more, brilliantly colored coats-of-arms were displayed on every gateway, and hung at every little door; they were continually torn down and changed; and hence came brawls, and murder. More than four thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand men on foot were the guests of the city, and more were continually arriving.

Doctors strutted about with anxious looks, carrying great flasks of medicine. The crowded state of the city was the cause of much disease, and many died; and from many a house was carried out a corpse.

The housewives and maidens could not keep off the beggars who grew ever more insistent; they shrilly appealed to the fact that the kingdom of heaven belonged to the poor alone. The watch appeared and scattered the ragged crowd. But before they would go, they fought between and beneath the butchers' benches and the vegetable booths for any refuse that would serve for their midday meal.

The Cardinal of Mainz was riding out of the city gate at the head of his splendid cavalcade, mounted

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on brown and white horses. He wore a bottle-green hunting dress, and carried a swaying falcon on his wrist. The cavalcade came to a stop. A procession of monks, nuns, schoolmasters, scholars and children was slowly approaching, with banners and glittering gold crosses, and burning tapers whose flames were invisible in the sunlight. With solemn chants they were escorting into the city a preacher of indulgences whom Aleander had summoned for his purposes.

The Mainzer rode across the head of the procession; but there was no means of passing; the strange cavalcade barred his way.

"Back," he cried angrily.

The riders at the end of the line turned; the knights, his guests, and the prickers with their leashes of dogs swung round their kicking, rearing horses in the narrow alley. The horses' heads almost touched the lower story of the projecting upper parts of the houses. With the baying, yelping hounds at the head of it, as though already in the full cry of the hunt, the train of riders surged forward. And at the rear, with flushed indignant face, bent low over his saddle, rode Albrecht of Mainz. The leather cap of his favorite falcon had been pushed off by the movements of his restive, plunging horse; the hunting falcon spread its pinions and flapped them once or twice, then, with a shrill cry, it soared into the air upwards through the gray haze from the censers swinging in rhythm with the acolytes' bells that tinkled menacingly behind the surging cavalcade.

"We bring you indulgence, for 3,400 years," sang the apprentices.

The Mainzer's hunting falcon rose and rose.

High above the steeple on the cathedral, from which the papal banner hung fluttering in the breeze, the falcon shot into the flocks of circling doves that scattered screaming at his approach. Something sank like a stone in its vertical fall—a large white dove flecked with blood struck the roof of the cathedral and plunged downwards to the ground. A thousand throats cried out in superstitious awe. Pale, erect in the stirrups of his dun mare, the Mainzer galloped off.

His hunting falcon disappeared into the infinity of heaven. . . .

The imperial heralds rode slowly and pompously through the tumultuous, shouting mob, surging round the shop of a bookseller who had been imprisoned for having Luther's writings in his possession. They imperiously cleared themselves a way with swinging strokes of their long staves. Some truculent Spanish halberdiers were escorting two swaying mule-drawn litters, closed and looking haughtily aloof. The crowd greeted them respectfully; bared their heads and scraped and bowed.

The bandy-legged Ambassador of the Most Christian King of France looked out of the window of his lodging and watched the litters approach. He drew to his side the parched-looking French representative at the Diet and whispered: "How much does Chièvres

want?" The clerks stood, black-clad and respectful, against the walls of the room.

"The marriage treaty must be brought to an issue," answered Barroys.

"I understand," murmured the Ambassador, with the clumsy gestures of the deaf, leaning forward in a high state of excitement. "The Pope is to be made to fear we may desert him if he does not at last declare himself."

"He cannot do that so long as the heretic is not burnt," answered the Ambassador impatiently. "We are sure of the Swiss. The Duke of Lüneburg and the Elector of Brandenburg have spent our money on hiring twelve thousand *landsknechts* to use against their Emperor."

"But surely the young puppy is also preparing for war? His Commander-in-Chief has fifteen thousand men under arms stationed in this city." The Ambassador sputtered out saliva on to the other's cheeks. "This is going to be an expensive business."

"No reasonable man, least of all a prince, will revolt without being paid for it."

The guard below rattled their iron-shod lanceshafts on the pavement.

Barroys laid a warning finger on his mouth which a badly powdered scar of the French sickness made to look awry. His eyes flashed a warning; and he folded his arms pompously across his pigeon chest. This short, unpleasing looking gentleman, clad in blue and red,

stood haughtily ready to receive the imperial negotiators.

"You must oppose me here and there," he whispered, without showing a sign that he was speaking. "Pretend to hesitate. We must compromise Habsburg."

The bandy-legged Ambassador nodded agreement. He, too, folded his arms. While Barroys stood facing the door, however, he arrogantly turned his back to his visitors.

The long table, covered with the French royal colors, was scattered with parchments and quill pens, and in the center towered up a large, dark-colored inkstand filled to the brim, and a silver box of blotting sand.

Two pages entered and bowed deeply.

Chièvres and Gattinara came in side by side. They laid their hands against their chests in greeting.

Barroys bowed coldly, his gloved hand on his dagger.

"We greet the lieges of the Most Christian King of France," began Chièvres.

"Greeting and thanks to the lieges of the Catholic King and Roman Emperor," replied Barroys with reserve.

"Our gracious lord," said Chièvres, "feels so warm an affection for his good cousin, the Most Christian King of France, that your master does well to open his heart to his Majesty the Emperor."

"My Most Christian King will be glad to have a proof that the Roman King understands his own advantage, and no longer woos the favor of treacherous England."

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"Herr von Chièvres was always a warm friend of France," broke in Gattinara's coarser, deeper bass. "It was not until lately that I became of his mind."

Barroys raised his foxy eyes with a searching glance. "So you have come here, my Lord Great Chancellor, to establish an eternal friendship between Valois and Habsburg?"

"If it pleases you."

"One moment, my lords."

Barroys walked up to his master's Ambassador, who had remained averted and silent, and with an air of entreaty took him by the arm.

The bandy-legged dignitary shook him off impatiently; but Barroys would not yield, and whispered so loud in his excited insistency that all in the room could not but hear him.

"I earnestly beg you—nay, I command you, my lord, to treat the servants of our future son-in-law with the respect due to these important gentlemen."

"You, Barroys, have been here for many months," replied the Ambassador; "but I am from Paris and I know how inveterately Herr Gattinara has worked against France."

"I bid you obey me. It is a Christian duty to show forgiveness that the peace of Christendom may be kept."

"You shall have your way if you must; but you will see that all negotiation with these gentlemen will be in vain." The Ambassador turned towards the im-

perial envoys with an expression that suggested this was a most unlooked-for encounter.

They sat in a row on the dark red silk-covered chairs placed ready for them.

Gattinara began the proceedings: "What does Madame Louise get in the way of dowry?"

"The claims of the French Crown to Naples."

"In other words, France is only prepared to give her unjust claims to Naples, which, in fact, belongs to us."

Chièvres waved his hand impatiently as though in deprecation of his companion. "That disposes of one possible cause of war, my lord," he whispered audibly and with an insinuating air.

"And the far greater danger of war with England comes much nearer," retorted Gattinara brusquely.

"You see, Barroys," spluttered the French Ambassador, "Herr Gattinara refuses our King's daughter."

"And what are we to pay for the promise of marriage?" asked Gattinara, unmoved. With open contempt he wiped his deaf adversary's spittle from his robe of ceremony.

"One hundred thousand crowns yearly until the marriage takes place."

"That is a great deal of money, Herr Barroys, seeing that the bride is only five years old."

Chièvres then took the ball and threw it.

"Supposing," he said with courteous consideration, "supposing Madame Louise dies before she can marry our exalted monarch?"

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"Then one of her sisters would take her place, Herr Chièvres."

With every sign of complete satisfaction Chièvres bent his head in respectful agreement: he turned to Gattinara and said: "That proves a very honorable intention on the part of the Most Christian King."

"But what," said Gattinara, "if the Most Christian King loses Madame Louise by death, and can produce no other daughter? At the moment Madame Louise has no sister."

With an air of pained apology for his companion's brusqueness, Chièvres glanced at the French Ambassador, who was staring arrogantly in front of him over his ungainly crossed arms and legs.

"In that case France's claims on Naples, of course, hold good," replied Barroys.

"We shall, therefore, be penalized if Madame Louise dies, and the Most Christian King is not able to produce another daughter?"

"Your King might die too, Herr Gattinara," put in the French Ambassador.

Chièvres again joined in with an eager attempt at reconciliation. "If our imperial master dies before the marriage takes place," he said, "which may Almighty God forbid, then we shall suggest that the treaty be fulfilled by our Emperor's brother, the King of Austria, who would then succeed him."

"I thank you, I thank you from my heart, Herr von Chièvres," said Barroys.

"I refuse to pay the hundred thousand crowns," an-

nounced Gattinara. "The English Princess can be had much cheaper."

The French Ambassador got up. "I see no possibility of ending the dispute," he said; "we will break off the discussion."

"I, too, see no possibility of agreement," answered Gattinara, and went on calmly sitting where he was. "I only came here to please Herr Chièvres."

Barroys paled: that meant that Gattinara would help Chièvres to a higher bribe. It must be paid, in order that Habsburg might be detached from the English alliance. Barroy's high-heeled silk shoe felt for Herr von Chièvres' foot. A pressure signified to the latter France's willingness to pay a higher price.

"Herr Gattinara knows very well," said Chièvres in a propitiatory tone, "that the King of France is the neighbor of Spain, Flanders and of our Italian possessions. He knows that a marriage alliance of this kind with France equally implies a similar alliance with the Holy Father in Rome."

"Since when has the Pope taken to sleeping with ruling sovereigns instead of women?" asked Gattinara.

The gentlemen smiled. Suddenly an atmosphere of conciliation was observable. Gattinara again destroyed it.

"Before everything, the Pope must withdraw his proposal to France to rob us of Naples, while we are involved in difficulties with this heretic on Rome's account."

"The Emperor," replied the French Ambassador,

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"could not make any serious resistance to a determined attack by our and the papal forces."

"That I know, my lord: but I also know that Germany brings the Pope three times as much as France."

"In any case," returned Barroys in a shrill, rasping voice, "you owe us one hundred and fifty thousand thalers. I appeared before the Diet to demand payment."

"The armed bands now ravaging Luxemburg are paid by you."

"No, no," said Chièvres in a pained tone.

The French Ambassador again got up: and Barroys stood up too; with clasped, imploring hands, Chièvres sprang swaying to his feet. "I beg of you," he said, "let us not estrange father-in-law and son-in-law. I have authority to ask that the King of France may be patient for a few months more over this matter."

The Frenchmen looked contemptuously at Gattinara; he sat unmoved and replied with complete non-chalance:

"Besides the English marriage project, for the accomplishment of which the King of England would pay far more than the King of France, and also offers an alliance, I have before me two more offers of marriage."

They all stared at Gattinara, including Chièvres.

"One is an offer from the King of Hungary," went on Gattinara, in a matter-of-fact tone; "this offer would give great satisfaction in this country, if I were to publish it."

Chièvres began to quiver. This Gattinara was the very devil. The Frenchmen stood as if a thunderbolt had struck the earth beside them.

"The marriage of our Emperor with the daughter of the King of Hungary would mean the addition of Hungary, Bohemia and Poland to the Habsburg Dynasty. The second marriage proposal comes from the King of Portugal. He, the richest prince on earth, who is not merely the neighbor of our Spanish patrimony, but rules countless other nations including the Indies, offers his daughter with a dowry of six hundred thousand ducats."

Profound silence.

"But because," pursued Gattinara, "Herr von Chièvres does not desire the ruin of his French native land . . ."

"My lord," cried the Frenchmen in a fury, and laid their hands upon their daggers.

". . . to which, with the Portuguese at our back—an alliance that would mean the end of all our difficulties and the immediate and complete collapse of France—I should be in no way averse," proceeded Gattinara calmly; "on those grounds I shall shift the responsibility for the failure of these negotiations on to your shoulders, my lords."

Barrois trembled helplessly. His face was wet with a sudden outbreak of sweat. He passed his trembling hand over his chin; the scar of his old disease broke and began to discharge. The French envoys observed

with despair that Chièvres was staring at Gattinara with amazement. Had Portugal offered so much? Barroys flung open his arms, rushed upon Chièvres and embraced him so vigorously that the latter nearly fell down.

"The peace of humanity is saved, my worthy friend," cried Barroys. "We will conclude the pact. May the Heavenly Powers thank you."

Gattinara calmly signed to the clerks to approach the table and carry out the duties of their office. "Take care, Chièvres," he said, "not to catch the infection of your native land . . . Karl, by the grace of God, Roman King of Spain and the two Sicilies, of Jerusalem . . . Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Lorraine, Brabant, Luxemburg, Geldern, Count of Flanders, Habsburg, Tirol, Alsace, elected Roman Emperor . . ." dictated Gattinara; "from to-day forth, no longer France's vassal."

The Ambassador from Paris broke in with a confused splutter:

"If you insert that, you must also stipulate that Naples falls unconditionally to our King, if you break the marriage treaty!"

"Certainly, certainly," replied Gattinara, "that I can surely do, for if my master breaks the treaty he is bound to be so strong that no power on earth could take Naples away from him."

The French Ambassador angrily passed his tongue over his lips and was silent. Gattinara went on dictating.

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"When shall I send you the eighty thousand ducats?" asked Barroys softly.

Chièvres smiled a weary deprecatory smile, pleased with the increase in the amount of his bribe.

"There is no need," he replied in a soft whisper, "to give me presents for doing my duty. But Frau von Chièvres would certainly be glad to get the money to-day."

CHAPTER XVI

THERE was no more peace for the good men of Worms. Again and yet again all the church bells hurled their metallic reverberations over the city; in all the churches, organs crashed and boomed. Psalms and canticles rang out on every side; and through all the streets marched processions of loudly chanting monks. The reek of incense reached the furthest courtyard and the remotest attic; Aleander had it burnt in enormous quantities, as though he wanted to stupefy and stifle the city and all its inhabitants.

The communities of prayer marched under the leadership of their priests and leaders. They carried with them relics and large gold-framed holy pictures, and cried at every house and corner:

"Beware of the heretic. Tear the devil in pieces, slay him, quarter him, and burn him. Pray, good people all! Deliver us, deliver us, Divine and Merciful Maiden, Saint Sebastian, Saint Anna—that the youth and evil counselors of a foreign Emperor may not bring young German souls to hell."

A smoldering stench from the kindled pyre before the Town Hall crept through the now sultry air.

"Pray shut the window," said Glapion irritably to the emissary from Trier. The lean archiepiscopal official started, but hurriedly and obsequiously obeyed.

A voice rang out from the street: "I can send all heretics and those who neglect their religion to burn in hell. Our Holy Father in Rome has power over heaven and upon earth. All who put money into my indulgence box here will have their sins forgiven them by the Holy Father. Whom the Pope forgives, him also must God forgive."

Aleander proceeded to give his orders. "You are to make your speech before the Diet without constraint, as though you were speaking from your own mind. No one must think that the game is set. Your master, the Lord Archbishop, says you have a good memory. You must learn the speech and the questions word for word."

The pock-marked Treasurer nodded in pompous acquiescence. "I shall begin thus on the heretical dog," he answered and stood up. Erect and stiff, with rolling eyes and thunderous voice, he began to address a cupboard in front of him.

"Martin Luther, his Imperial Majesty has summoned you hither on two grounds. First, to discover whether you have the courage here to acknowledge the writings that have been spread abroad under your name."

"Good!" said Aleander approvingly. The Treasurer's face flushed with pleasure. Aleander walked mincingly up to the Emperor's confessor: "That was a brilliant formula of yours, Master Glapion, to leave a postern open for the heretic; it will certainly stir him from his obstinacy."

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Glapion had laid his hands in his lap and was looking silently at the floor. Was he so poor and mean a creature that Aleander could treat him so utterly as his slave? It was true he knew how such business was done, but had he given this boorish Church bully cause to humiliate him thus? Aleander had offered him money as he might have done to any scoundrel: that should not be forgiven him.

When Aleander saw that Glapion did not intend to answer, he again turned to the Treasurer.

"You must at once proceed to the next question so as to make it clear that we will not enter upon any sort of discussion or dispute."

The Treasurer bowed, and again turned towards the cupboard; his harsh voice once more resounded through the room:

"If you so acknowledge them, then, secondly, you must state whether you maintain, or desire to withdraw, the contents of those volumes." And he waited for his auditor's criticism.

"Don't you think it would be better, dear brother Glapion," asked Aleander, "to say 'whether you desire to maintain the contents of your books, or to withdraw any part of them'?"

Glapion again gave no answer. With quivering eyelids and nervously compressed lips, he turned his thin face away from the windows that rattled, shook, and threatened to crack under the rush of air from the frantic, headlong, swaying clamor of the bells. There

were no longer distinguishable peals: it was a confused roar, as though hell were opening.

With ill-concealed malice Aleander said: "You see, Brother Glapion, in the Emperor's interest I am doing everything I can to soften this stubborn heretic. I do not want his cowardice driven to despair."

"Among that collection of books are some that the accused Doctor did not write."

Aleander flushed. "The books will be on a table behind the Treasurer," he replied, "and will in no case be shown. Do you understand, sir?"

"Very well, my lord," said the latter.

"The heretic may only answer Yes or No."

"Very well, my lord."

"You are not to let him utter another word."

"Very well, my lord."

"I shall also inform the Marshal of the Diet of the matter"—the continuous tinkle of the money dropped by the worthy citizens of Worms into the indulgence boxes under the windows made him feel very confident—"he will impress upon the heretic that he may not utter a word before the Diet on matters on which he is not questioned. If he tries to do so, we have taken measures for a disturbance to break out in the hall, and thus drown his insults."

Fanfares and trumpet calls rang out in front of the house. The preacher of indulgences could be heard, crying:

"God has given all power to the Pope and to his servants. As God has withdrawn Himself, ye are to

obey the Holy Father in Rome in all things. All men are subject to the Pope, high or low, poor or rich, prince or servant."

The Treasurer rasped out his speech to its end. "On you lies the guilt of schism and of bloodshed. Heed not your conscience—you must not, for your conscience errs: then you may recant, and all shall yet be well. If you recant, the Emperor will be merciful. Leave these paths of darkness and enter upon the straight way at last. Give an upright and a plain answer. If your false opinions and heresies had been your own, then his Imperial Majesty would perhaps plead with the Holy Father that no harm should come to you. But your errors, madman, are the teachings of the convicted heretics in England and Bohemia, now condemned long since. God has spoken, and Justice has spoken. Would you affirm that God has allowed his Church to live in error until your time? Give a clear answer, that all may understand."

"If Herr Doctor Luther obeys you, the danger, I think, is past," said Glapion and got up; "however, I do not know my imperial master's intention now that he is reconciled with France."

"What!"

"Did you not know? But you must have known."

"I know nothing of it. What do you mean—reconciled with France?"

"Well, you are prepared," answered Glapion, "and so are we." He walked briskly to the door.

What was this about France?

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Aleander was shaken; his knees and legs began to quiver.

He turned to shout at Glapion to return. But Glapion had gone.

CHAPTER XVII

PANTING uneasily, Aleander slipped on a doctor's gown and hat over his clerical garb. It seemed too dangerous to show himself in the streets to-day in the guise of the Pope's Legate.

When he walked out into the now hot and scorching sunshine, into the persistent booming of the bells over the reeking, crowded square and the thronged streets, a fresh tumult immediately met his eyes

The Spanish men-at-arms who had been waiting with their mule-teams outside the Bishop's palace for their masters, were riding into the assembled mob, cursing and lashing out with their whips onto the huddled heads. All was turmoil, shouts and insults until the arrival of the watch, who could hardly be everywhere at once.

Sections of the watch had been mounted so that they might be on the spot more quickly. But this only made matters worse. The Spaniards who recognized the Emperor, alone, as their master, and cared nothing for this city in a foreign land, only plunged more vigorously into the fray. Aleander saw another proof that Antichrist was sojourning in that city.

The men of Worms, who would at other times have jeered at the city watch, suddenly made common cause with them. The Spaniards were thus hard pressed.

Then some Saxon and Swabian knights appeared on the scene, under the leadership of the Imperial Herald, Sturm. At his instance, they laid about them ruthlessly with the flats of their swords. The Spaniards were beaten back and yielded.

Aleander limped hurriedly towards the refuge of his lodgings.

Perhaps too many bells were ringing and there were too many processions in the streets. Truly a man never knew where he was with these Germans. Dolts they seemed; yet more easily roused to fury by threats of everlasting damnation than any other people. They took everything with equal seriousness. How could one deal with them? First they believed in nothing, then suddenly in everything. Timid and silent at first—then lightning, storm, and earthquake.

All the faces into which Aleander peered in his anxiety, faces that recognized or ignored him, were tense and deeply stirred. All these people seemed to see an enemy whom they meant to crush and to destroy. He knew this state of remorse and weakness of the spirit. It was essential if the sheep were to be kept in the pen, but these faces were those of men overdriven—the agony had gone too deep. The Emperor had delayed beyond the time, the moment had passed. They had been too long lulled in security: the reaction was too great—they would not endure it.

Aleander saw that despair was on them, and at any moment it might break out.

The bells must be stopped. But how could all the

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towers be reached—they had had their orders for the whole day.

The cobbled pavements were strewn with pictures of Luther. Many carried them piously against their chests, or under their arms, or in their hands. It seemed as though they had fallen from that hazy sky. They were wafted into gutters and on to the gabled roofs. They fluttered everywhere on the sultry breeze, down on to huddled groups of people, doing their evil work. These cold Germans were capable of the most sudden excesses. Aleander would have liked to dash upon every one of those pictures, defile it, tear it and stamp it beneath his feet; but he did not dare.

What did Glapion's expression mean? What was this business with France? Was the Emperor taking the side of the Germans? Was that why the men of Worms had so changed?

Was Rome really in danger?

Aleander hurried past his lodgings intending to visit Caracciolo. But in front of the Swan Tavern the crowds were packed so thick that the whole street was a serried space of shoulders and heads. The *Kämmererstrasse* was like a brook in flood straining at its banks. People had actually clambered on to the cornices, or clutched and bestridden the shop-shutters and the tradesmen's signs; all heads were turned towards the alleyway to the left—to Luther's lodging! Perhaps it had been like this in Jerusalem, when the Savior preached.

Here he could not pass. Aleander turned, soaked

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in sweat. He saw foreign faces everywhere, faces of men that were not of that town. Many peasant faces. He must positively see Caracciolo. The outbreak might be expected at any moment. Then a voice rose up clear above the hubbub: two stonemasons were holding up a man who began to speak towards Luther's windows. An uncanny silence fell upon that vast assemblage, as the man shouted:

"Thou that hast reawakened Christian Truth and dost battle for our freedom, we greet thee. Thou hast taken pity on the poor, and again made the German people understand that God is not in Rome alone and exists because it is Rome's will, but is also to be found in German lands, and in every human breast. The Pope would wantonly hinder the reformation of our Holy Catholic Church, upon which we take our stand. The Roman Bishop has unjustly placed himself above all bishops of the earth, and called himself Pope, to the harm of Christendom. We are ready, Martin Luther, to go to Rome with thee, and thence our Emperor shall rule the Christian world, and not the Pope."

"Hoch Carolus!"

There was a roar of applause; and a counter-roar; and then for a moment there was a confusion of shouts.

With hatred in his heart, Aleander looked up at the nearest church tower, whose tall spire towered up calmly into the dun-colored sky above the tapering gables and tiled roofs. Curse that bell-ringer! There he was, far above them leaning on his elbows against the gal-

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lery, and genially observing what seemed to him a pleasant excitement in the city below.

"Who was that?" whispered Aleander to one who had crossed himself in horror at every one of the speaker's shouted words.

"I don't know him—he is not of this city."

So the agents of rebellion traveled about, did they? Was that the reason for this concourse? So great a crowd had not come of its own free will, nor could so many be encamped outside the city.

"Strange soldiers are putting up tents outside the town; bands of peasants have been seen with their banner of revolt."

There! Aleander observed conical orange-colored hats with white edges, a great jagged cluster of them, nodding their heads together in agreement. Jews! The well-poisoners, the child-murderers, defilers of the Host, the slayers of the Savior—were they on the side of the heretic? And no one molested them, no one—as was once the custom—pushed them into the gutter; did they count as equals now?

"Christ's murderers!"

Aleander ran, bounding with the despairing energy of an escaping lunatic, back to his lodging. Suddenly he was almost brought down by the violence of his agitation, when he saw—the Saxon Chancellor! in the company of a man in priestly dress. This could be no other than the scoundrel from Wittenberg who had traveled here with the traitor. Aleander forgot Caracciolo, France, the Jews, his fear, every thought of

reason. He rushed towards Brück and his companion: they were walking to the *Kämmererstrasse*. Suddenly he cried out: some one must have recognized him; he felt a shock of pain as a stone hit his shoulder. Gasping, dripping with sweat, with glaring eyes, threatening and cursing, Aleander fled.

Wearily and with careworn face, the burly Brück worked his way forward through the living walls. Louder and louder rang out the voice of the speaker in front of him over the undulating lines of close-shaven heads.

"The German nation cannot support every fifth man as a priest. Of every hundred priests nine and ninety are not needed. They should work as we do. The German nation wants to be independent once again and not depend on priests and priestly law and papal favors that can be bought for money: we would have God's word preached plainly and truthfully by our own priests in our own tongue: we would choose our spiritual guides from our own people."

With a troubled look, but full of secret joy, Brück whispered: "Do you see that? Every one of his words has come to life. Perhaps . . ."

Brück's companion went on in silence. The same little scene was constantly repeated. When the Chancellor laid his hand on the shoulders of those standing in front of him, they turned quickly, doffed their caps, and huddled closer so as to let him and his companion pass. And sometimes there were shouts of applause. A sudden exulting roar burst forth that quickly changed

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into ringing laughter when the people recognized Schott in Luther's window—unwashed, pale, heavy-eyed, his hair still in wild disorder from his night's debauch.

"The Roman priests are no better than slaveholders," cried the street preacher. "They are the inventors of all guile, masters of all deceit, and the authors of all our slavery. Rome robs us and gives us in return an evil reputation in foreign lands. She is responsible for all our troubles. Bishoprics, canonries, prebendaries, dispensations, absolutions, every sort of office and privilege—even God's mercy itself—she sells for money. When a man is born or dies, or takes a wife, or thinks about his dead—the Romish priest thrusts out his greedy hand, and by the threat of everlasting damnation exacts what he wants, and we must give and give: thus do they hold us down. Did not our Lord Jesus say: 'Turn not your Father's Temple into a den of thieves.' "

"German people!" shouted Schott from above, "trust your knights, they will bring you freedom."

"Shut your mouth, you drunken ruffian!"

"Robber of the peasants."

"Sniveling fool."

A volley of stones: Schott disappeared.

A pestilent stench drifted over the crowd, and they shuddered.

"Luther! Before the gates of this city Christians have been broken on the wheel, their blood-soaked heads impaled on tall spikes, and their tongues that wished to speak of you, torn out: your pyre is kindled:

your writings will be burnt. Let them burn and murder: your words will burn in the hearts of all good men for all time. They will never perish!"

"Quick," hissed Brück, and pushed his companion to the door of the Swan. "Nonsense, man," he added impatiently, as the other courteously raised his hand to let him go first.

The street was full of tumult and uproar; then silence fell, and, as suddenly, was rent by shouts and whistles.

"The City Guard!"

Brück, his face clouded with anxiety, pushed the mighty door-staple forward from within. But his companion in the priest's habit, flushing nervously at his assurance, but with an expression of great determination, hurried towards him; and the Wittenberger let the staple drop again.

"We must not bar out those who would take refuge here, my Lord Chancellor."

Again, as though upon a preconcerted sign, the booming, roaring tumult of the bells began to cleave the air from every tower: wilder now and more fanatical, and openly hostile. It stormed and overwhelmed the defenseless city. The unchained fury of that onset raged through the air, sweeping over the roofs of the houses in an endless surge of iron squadrons.

The terrified crowd began to climb up the wooden stairway of the Elector's lodging.

Before the portal stood a huge spotted hound, baying savagely and cowering in its fear. The snarling beast's

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white teeth glittered in the crowded, tumultuous half-darkness of the gateway.

"Down!" screamed a small lean man in a priest's habit, peering nervously out of the doorway; the dog turned and walked before the two men into the room.

Brück bowed low.

When he straightened himself again he saw his Elector, in gorgeous array, with one leg outstretched on a chair in front of him. Behind Frederic beamed the thin spiritual face of Schurff, the Professor of Law in the Electoral University. He placed his lean hand, with an inquisitorial air, over his reddish, carefully trimmed, pointed beard, and asked in a clear penetrating voice:

"I hope it was not Luther who was addressing these foolish brawlers just now?"

Brück's gentle companion answered reproachfully:

"Do you know our Herr Doctor so ill?"

Schurff's face remained tense and anxious; he fixed his cold, impassive eyes on the Elector, who sat rubbing his gouty knee with much woebegone and remorseful lamentation, as though he realized his conduct was not entirely worthy of his dignity.

Then they heard an even more pitiable groan, loud and long-drawn-out, as though in mockery of the electoral performance; Brück looked up. Klaus the Fool had also laid a leg upon a chair, exactly like the Elector, and was rubbing his knee in mimicry of his master.

An embarrassed silence fell; Schurff smiled slightly.

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"When we have finished groaning," said Klaus sagely, "we will all weep together."

Brück looked uncertainly at his master, who waved his hand impatiently as though he were somewhat of his Fool's opinion.

"Your Grace," Brück began in a bold tone, throwing out his broad chest; "I bring you the worthy Herr Amsdorf who can give your Grace news of our Herr Doctor."

"Say on," ordered Frederic, rubbing his knee so vigorously and with such an air of resigned intensity that Schurff would not have been surprised if the electoral hose had caught fire.

"When the safe conducts from your Grace and his Imperial Majesty arrived, we set out," began Amsdorf solemnly.

Schurff, intent upon the man, wagged his long head impatiently: they all knew that.

"The Herr Doctor is in good spirits," went on Amsdorf hastily; "he will not flinch before the Diet, your Grace. He said that before he recanted, he would sooner die for the sake of the young men now studying in Germany, that they might not grow up as hitherto in the dreadful superstitions of the Roman Church."

They looked at Frederic: he sat as before, bent forward and rubbing his knee, but the movement was now slow, gentle, reflective, almost affectionate.

Spalatin knew that they could not now expect any statement from their master, but how did Schurff inter-

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pret that silence; did he think that the Elector would throw Luther over?

The jurist stood rigid. With compressed lips he stared coldly and reflectively in front of him. The roar of the church bells continued.

Amsdorf folded his hands. This priestly obsequiousness annoyed Brück. The Fool, with great troubled, gleaming eyes, like those of a cat, peered at the Elector from his corner.

Frederic stopped rubbing. He heaved himself heavily round in his chair towards Schurff.

"I beg you, Herr Professor," he said slowly and glanced for a moment up at his learned lawyer with his great, pouched eyes; "stand by my Martinus. He must not threaten and defy the Diet."

"Certainly, your Highness."

Spalatin nodded in eager agreement with his master's words, looking leaner than ever.

"Luther must behave respectfully and courteously, he must not embitter these high lords against him."

With rising indignation Brück snorted through his long straight nose. He stood with his muscular legs wide apart, gripping the hilt of his long sword.

"What has your Highness decided?" he asked, in an attitude more suited to a headstrong captain of mercenaries than a quill-driving Electoral Chancellor. "How will your Highness deal with the matter if the Diet condemn Herr Luther to outlawry, or imprison him?"

Frederic raised himself groaning, apparently with

the greatest effort and in acute pain. He stood swaying, and to steady himself stretched out a hand to his Chancellor, and so forced the latter to break off his questions and spring to his aid.

On the other side the lean Spalatin supported his master's heavy form.

"Give me my cloak and hat."

Klaus sprang up like a flash of lightning and seized them; with a furious gesture he flung the cloak and electoral hat through the room; Spalatin caught them.

With the utmost composure the Elector suffered the great red cloak of ceremony, edged with ermine at the cuffs, to be placed round his shoulders. Frederic himself put on the red hat with the spotted fur brim, and with his gloved right hand picked up his huge sword below the hilt.

"It is time, my dear friends, Brück and Spalatin," said he, "to go to his Imperial Majesty."

Spalatin looked at his master in alarm. The Elector had forgotten his dinner. That had never happened before. And was that all he had to say?

Frederic again turned to Schurff. He knew what the latter thought of all this pompous pageantry, but he did not mind. "Take care of my Martinus. Tell him that many of his writings have given me a good deal of satisfaction. Impress on him that he is not to be too hasty."

Frederic bowed with careful courtesy to Amsdorf; then he walked majestically out of the room accom-

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panied by Brück and Spalatin, whose faces were flushed with their embarrassment.

"Stupid, fat, cowardly swine," hissed Klaus after him like an infuriated sparrow.

"God's will be done," cried Amsdorf with raised imploring hands.

"If the silly beaver had managed things properly," said Schurff angrily, "Luther would have stood to-day before impartial judges, instead of this feeble corrupt Diet, that the priests have under their thumbs."

"The Elector is right," said Schurff reproachfully, "he wants to appear absolutely neutral in the whole matter, even as touching Herr Luther's person."

"You are a pack of cowardly swine," cried Klaus. "If Herr Luther was like you then Germany would never be free." The Elector's dog, which the Fool had been trying to soothe by slowly scratching its pointed, three-cornered ears, got up behind the other two and began to bark furiously and venomously at Schurff.

"He who has great faith is always free," replied Amsdorf with great conviction; "let God do His work." He looked at Schurff with folded hands and kindly, pale face. His hands were clasped in prayer for unity in that heavy hour. "We must trust in God, we have no other help."

"I can see that," snarled Klaus, and got upon his feet, holding the dog fast by its leather collar.

"Herr Amsdorf," said Schurff, "my duty as a lawyer compels me to point out to you that, if you show your-

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self openly on Luther's side, you can be seized and imprisoned by any one, anywhere, and be condemned to death. You have no safe conduct."

"I am aware of that. I can bear the consequences." With gaping mouth, small and misshapen, Klaus stood beside the huge dog that towered over him.

"Then we will go and see Herr Luther."

Decorously, and politely allowing the cleric to precede him, Schurff disappeared with Amsdorf.

Klaus sat down again. He crouched motionless with crossed legs, holding down the dog's mighty skull on to his knee. Two pairs of uneasy eyes meditated.

CHAPTER XVIII

ALBRECHT of Mainz rode angrily back into Worms in the midday heat, on his sweating, dusty horse at the head of his disordered hunting party, and behind him rode the imperial messengers, who had sought him everywhere for a Council of the Emperor and his Electors, and were now escorting him home, grumbling and cursing as he forced his way through the streets.

Bands of peasants were about everywhere.

The church bells were silent, and the preachers of indulgences had disappeared from the streets. But instead, amid the blare of trumpets from the lodgings of the lords and knights that rang out on this as on every day, only more muffled and more languid in this hot air, there could be heard a deafening, harsh, inexorable clang of a bell that did not ring for prayer.

It was a passing-bell ringing for some one on the way to death. The Mainzer drooped his head low over his horse's neck. The remaining loiterers scattered timidly out of the scorching streets and squares.

Ominous of horror, a clumsy, jolting cart appeared at the end of the *Kämmererstrasse*, accompanied by the Executioner's men.

Ever harsher and more menacing, the great square clapper of the convict's bell beat out its imperious

rhythm through the heavy sultry air, now strangely paralyzing.

Lowering, hot exhalations were wafted from the Rhine, like evening mist before its time, across the steel-gray firmament, at which the eyes of men could not bear to look, for fear, almost of blindness. The sun had disappeared behind a haze. Something invisible, tremendous, had descended upon and enveloped the city, which lay powerless and exhausted, helpless after a despairing resistance, upon the face of an arid world.

Invisible, gigantic hands were reaching down.

The swallows, just home from the south, no longer recognized the town: with downward sweeps, and wings pressed close to their sides, they shot and circled round the gables and towers with shrill, distracted cries.

Nearer and nearer creaked the cart. The Executioner's men, sweating and wearisomely wiping their foreheads, cursed as they urged on the skinny, stumbling mare which was dragging a man to the imperial gallows by the Town Hall.

All the passers-by felt their courage ebb as they recognized the city fisherman condemned to death by the Archbishop. They crossed themselves and fled.

This once portly personage hung forward broken and shattered, crouching over his heavy clanking fetters. Every jolt of the cart was agony. Sitting stiff and tall beside him was the Emperor's Provost with the red hen's feather on his pointed hat.

"Sit straight," cried one of the armed guard; he

raised his partisan as though to dash it against the condemned man's chest, but the Executioner seized the iron-studded lance-shaft and pushed it aside. Swaying as he stood in the heaving, tipping cart, balancing to its movements, he shot a sidelong glance up at Luther's windows. Then he signed to the guard, who was driving the skinny mare, to pull up.

"They've broken his joints in the torture-chamber," shouted the Executioner; "get up, one of you, and hold him so that he does not fall to pieces until we get the rope round his neck."

The Executioner's cart stopped exactly opposite the *Johanniterhof*, as though it had come to fetch some one to the gallows.

One of the guards, with much cursing, prepared to clamber up beside the victim, when a man suddenly appeared on the scene as though he had dropped down from heaven, or had been hidden in a doorway waiting for the cart, and stood before the shaggy jade, whose bones stood out pitifully discolored beneath the mangy hide. And laying his hand over the tottering creature's eyes that seemed almost ready to drop out, while the horse began to nuzzle at him greedily as though in search of food or drink, the man spoke in a loud voice to the lanky Executioner, who looked down at him inquiringly.

"Why are you taking this poor wretch to the gallows?"

"He killed a bailiff who tried to arrest him. He lay under the ban of the Lord Bishop of Cologne because

he would not pay a tithe to our Holy Church. And, though under a ban, he fished in the waters of the Lord Archbishop."

"Then you do well, Master Veit. Every one who is not grateful to our Holy Church which provides for his salvation, must be destroyed."

The haggard, pallid face of the condemned man appeared above the edge of the cart.

"I don't care," he stuttered through his crushed lips, "whether I starve under a ban—because my fishing rights were taken from me—or whether my neck's broken—the tithe is more than a man can pay—with six—children. I poached—to pay the dues—so that my wife—and my children—should not go without the Holy Sacraments—as I had to."

"He who does not pay his dues to Holy Church steals that which is God's. You were justly banned. Whoso defies our Holy Church is fit only for the stake. May you go down to hell and be damned, without a word to show your grave."

Senseless and half-dead the tortured creature collapsed once more; only his fetters held this bundle of flesh and bones together under its bedraggled garments. A long-drawn-out neigh came from the skinny mare; with what remained of its tail, it lashed at the blood-thirsty flies that swarmed about it, quivered and strained forward.

"All who harm our Church and persist in so doing, the Emperor, as the loyal instrument of the Pope, will send to the stake," shouted the stranger at Luther's

window; and a repulsive and ominous echo of his voice was thrown back from the walls.

The Executioner mumbled something through his great, distorted jaws; he was growing uneasy. Crowds of peasants with menacing faces began to gather round the cart, and they looked like trying to rescue the victim. The Provost hastily signed to the men to get on; he took the reins himself and slashed the gathered ends against the old mare's hindquarters. She started and went on; and the cart rumbled forward.

For a moment an excited hum of voices burst forth at Luther's window; then silence fell once more, as though the mouths of those who tried to cry out had been closed by force.

With a wrench, Luther freed himself from Schurff's and Schott's desperately restraining arms; they rushed at him again and, in their anxiety, gripped his twisting, struggling body so as to prevent him reaching the window, which Amsdorf shut. With his back turned to the street the cleric planted himself in front of it, in an attitude of supplication and warning.

Luther pushed Schurff and Schott on one side; his face was sunken and pallid like that of a corpse; his breathing became audible.

"The poor man does not know," he panted; there was a white glare in his reproachful, angry eyes, though they saw nothing, "that there shall be much and great joy over him after his death."

With a hesitating, guilty look, as though asking pardon for what he had done, Amsdorf looked at the

others. They all stared at each other in confusion. In the extremity of his terror Schott still had fast hold of a sleeve of Luther's crumpled habit.

Schurff pulled himself together. "Believe me, Herr Luther, in your difficult case it is better not to mix in matters that do not concern you."

"Do you call the suffering and murder of a fellow-creature a matter that does not concern me?"

Schott then let fall Luther's sleeve. No sensible man could come to an understanding with this monk. What he said was always the exact contrary to common sense. The joy and hope inspired by the welcoming crowds in the streets had passed. And the monk had been so quiet lately. In the last few hours he had behaved like an entirely reasonable man. And now?

"Your foolish fear of death is an evil thing," went on Luther in a reproachful voice, and the torment in his eyes turned inwards; every rasping, clashing stroke of the passing-bell so worked on him that he was on the point of collapsing, and he groped sideways with his hand for support.

He looked sorrowfully at the others with an awful, stricken look upon his face. "Only if you live daily with the thought of death can you rightly live and obediently die."

Schott looked at Schurff. Did he understand that? Was this a new display of cowardice on the part of that troublesome protégé of theirs? He wanted to "die obediently"?

Schurff's face betrayed bewilderment, which changed

into a flush of shame; Schott turned away, these men were mere fools; Amsdorf's eyes began actually to swim. Schurff bowed his head deeply towards the ground. Schott realized that he must act. These swine from the cathedral and the chancery were all at sea. Herr Schott von Oberwindt pulled himself up and filled his lungs. He breathed deeply. God be praised: he had been trained to arms.

He threw back his head; and with a grasp that he hoped might hurt Luther, seized him by the arm and pulled him vigorously round.

"Doctor," began Schott, and the roots of his hair froze with self-complacency, "you know that I am your most faithful supporter?"

The look in Luther's troubled, only half-attentive eyes, still turbid and brooding, made Schott lose a little more of his self-control and drove him to anger.

"We von Oberwindts are men," he said, "who always stand by their knightly honor against every sort of injustice. I will not deny—" he gained in dignity through his love of truth, which stirred him and certainly raised him in Luther's eyes—"I will not deny that you were a disappointment to me when I saw you for the first time. But against that I reckoned the fact that you had at least come bravely into the lion's den. In short, I discovered in you a sort of knightly blood in spite of your peasant origin, and that I respected."

Schott paused a moment, in order to fill his lungs with air and himself with a further sense of superiority,

and to receive and enjoy the respectful and grateful looks of the others.

But as they looked at him with something like hostility, and Luther actually began to observe him with an expression of melancholy ridicule, he proceeded arrogantly:

"The Captain-General von Sickingen, who is my friend and a distinguished knight, as you may know, is in entire agreement with me that no champion of God has ever achieved his purpose without troops and an able commander."

The little knight again paused. He thought that Luther would at last understand and fall into an outburst of joy. But nothing of the sort happened; he must speak even more plainly.

"As my good friend Sickingen," pursued Schott, with an air of grandiose generosity, "has rather more military experience than I—I am prepared to admit, as a Christian should, that hitherto I have been chiefly engaged with my Bishop and other gentlemen in small raids and feuds, in which, however, I was always victorious; on that ground I am ready to leave the precedence to the Captain-General."

Schott again stopped. But Luther's expression was no more favorable. On the contrary, he seemed to be growing contemptuous. What was the rustic fool thinking about?

"Sickingen offers himself as your General, to help you in spreading your doctrines through Germany and imposing them on the country."

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Now it was out.

Schott glanced at Schurff; he could not endure Luther's eyes, which looked at him reprovingly like those of a schoolmaster at a stupid boy—the monk's wits were surely giving way: however, all the more depended on his own knightly reputation.

Schurff's face had changed and now looked more encouraging. He had pulled himself together and his muscles were now tense and ready.

Schott breathed again; the learned lawyer understood him.

Schurff looked, with an expression of beseeching inquiry at Luther's bloodless face, in which the mouth was now a little open and the eyes, with half-closed lids, lost in thought.

"We have been against the princes for a long time," burst out Schott; "they are breaking our power everywhere and seizing it all for themselves."

Again the harsh hammering of the passing-bell clanged violently in the ears of all of them.

With a sudden jerk and a shivering movement of his shoulders, Luther folded his arms vigorously and closely across his chest as though he were freezing. His sandals clattered on the floor as he began to pace up and down in front of Schott, with irregular, agitated steps. Then he stopped; without raising his head, he said in a commanding voice, with averted face:

"Answer, Amsdorf."

"It is written: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay.'"

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Luther with his arms convulsively pressed together and staring at the floor, nodded.

Indignant and disgusted at this uncomprehending and truly priest-like reception of his magnificent offer, Schott turned his back to Amsdorf and walked up to Luther. "I demand an answer from you."

For a while the gaze of Luther's great dark eyes burned into Schott's face; the little knight hurriedly put his hand up to his small, pointed beard to give himself some feeling of support.

"Tell those who sent you to me," replied Luther in a calm, kindly voice, "that I am truly a poor and much-driven man and, in my embarrassment, I have often thought of seeking protection from a man of war. But at the right moment, God—blessed be His name!—has always knocked my head against the wall, so that I realized what the words of our Lord Jesus meant; but you have not. Our Lord said: 'Whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant.' The weapons of true chivalry are in God. You oppress the poor and you only value them for ministering to your splendor and your pride, and you waste on your grand clothes, your gorging and your swilling, all the possessions that might help the poor. You are no true knights."

"You are a fool."

"Then let me be a fool who believes in God's word, which tells us that his kingdom is not based on outward show. You would conquer by the power of the sword, instead of the power of the spirit—you are just like Rome. Avaunt!" cried Luther in so wild an out-

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burst that the others scattered and retreated in terrified stupefaction to the walls. "Avaunt, Satan! I will not suffer myself to be tempted."

Luther was standing, his powerful figure erect, his great fists clenched and swollen at his sides, and his head thrown back; quivering with uncontrollable force.

"So you would reject your last friend?"

"You are not my friend, Herr von Oberwindt," replied Luther, in a broad, smooth, penetrating voice. "The Gospel is no shield for selfishness and fear of the peasants; it is not the common man who opposes you, it is God himself who turns against you in the peasants. Leave your stubborn frenzy; Christ conquers not by brute force but by suffering."

Luther's eyes lost their mysterious gleam; he spoke with a restrained and humble voice.

"Ask the lords who sent you not to despise me for my loyalty to God."

Schurff hastily put in: "I do not altogether share Herr von Oberwindt's proposal, but, none the less, one must reflect." The lawyer was silent; the poor lost monk looked into his eyes.

Schurff stepped back. Amsdorf's face lit up.

Schott burst into a contemptuous laugh.

"As you like." He turned disdainfully on his heel as they all fell silent—he had had enough. He picked up his sword and thrust it into the sword-belt at his side; twice he missed the belt in his excitement. "Pardon me," he said to mitigate his failure. "I thought you were standing by your doctrines."

"He certainly is not recanting, sir," cried Amsdorf.

"If you will not set force against force, and if you wish to suffer," pursued Schott, ignoring the appeals of the others and with an arrogant, red, furious face; all he thought of now was a departure that should not fall short of his dignity, "you have, then, no need of us." He made an elegant and sarcastic bow to Schurff, with a specially elaborate wave of the hand. "I go," he said with sly contempt, "to make sure of a place for the shameful spectacle that is prepared to-day for Germany and which the world will not forget."

He left the room with an arrogant strut and crashed the doors behind him with such effect that some plaster was shaken out of the wall and came spattering down the doorpost.

When Schott reached the street outside, he stopped short.

He was met by a waft of warm vapor as though from a gigantic bake-oven. Not a breath of air, no sunlight, although it was barely past midday.

Under a sky that had fused into a uniform gray-blue, men on foot and men on horses, silent and solemn, were proceeding on their way; grave, dark-clad men and women, and also many mounted women who had evidently a long ride behind them. Did they all of them want to be present at the dreadful performance whose outcome Schott already knew? Fresh arrivals began to pour into the city, their concourse seemed endless. Bands of peasants were marching along, clad in their

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rough garments, their broad knives by their sides—they were coming in from the St. Michael's suburb.

From the place of execution came men with stricken faces. They looked about them nervously and full of fear as though they were being pursued. The bell of death was dumb.

From the new town rose up shrill, piercing trumpet calls. The heralds were once more announcing the meeting of the Diet.

Kriechingen appeared at the end of the *Kämmererstrasse*. He seemed to be plunged in thought. He was walking with his groom to Luther's lodging. From the monasteries outside the city came the crystalline tinkle of many bells. Their sound was muffled, as though it came from very far, and drifted over the noiseless passers-by. In his curiosity to see the Executioner's handiwork Schott confined himself to a brief greeting.

"Kriechingen!" The tall knight in the worn leather doublet raised his eyes with a heavy dejected air; his groom did not stand aside, as is seemly when two noble gentlemen meet, and Schott cried: "Tell that lout of yours his duty."

"I am a Christian too," said the groom to Herr von Oberwindt. The leaden, oppressive heat, that almost took away his reason and constricted his brain, and the insolence for which he would have had one of his own serfs trussed up and thrown into a dungeon, brought darting sparks to Schott's angry eyes.

"Filthy swine of a peasant," he swore; "if your

master does not know what is proper, I'll teach you."

The sturdy, red-cheeked groom bent down, cleverly evaded the blow and ran off, half turning to put out his tongue.

"Kriechingen!" cried Schott.

"Let him be, he does not rightly understand the new freedom yet."

"The . . . new . . . freedom?" gaped Schott.

"The reckoning with you will come," cried the groom from a distance, threatening the knight with both his fists.

"By my sacred soul, I'll do for you, if I catch you."

"Blast your soul; I don't care that for your soul!"

"Tell him to look out," roared Schott and drew his sword.

"Go home, dear brother," cried Kriechingen beseechingly to his groom. "Justice shall be done to you."

Schott almost dropped his sword. "Dear . . . brother!" Justice should be done to the swine? He sheathed his sword resignedly when he observed that the groom had ducked his backside at him and was going off whistling.

"Kriechingen," said Schott, and laid his hand on his friend with the reddish beard streaked with gray. "Our monk has gone mad. He is going to recant."

Kriechingen smiled.

"If you don't believe it you can go to the Devil."

"I forgive you."

"A pox on you," returned Schott, and made off with great strides. It was time. The *landsknechts*, whom

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the city had lately hired, were collecting in front of the armory. The doors of the great hall slid open and a cannon, swinging between the enveloping spokes of its squat wheels rolled out; there was much rattling of chains; with drums and fifes at their head the Guilds of Smiths and Butchers were marching to their posts. They barred and occupied the alleyways between the cathedral to the St. Martin's gate. Iron-gauntleted city men-at-arms arrived with much clanking of coats-of-mail and huge swords.

They marched through the main streets and posted themselves at the entrances to the side alleys.

Suddenly behind all the windows people appeared once more; busy hands were seen brushing; coats of mail were polished bright; every man put on his armor. Little knots of people appeared in the street with an air of looking at the weather. All the taverns emptied. The reek of food sank to the ground and passed.

Under the body of the city fisherman, hanging stiffly from the gallows above its dismal platform, a crowd began to gather. Flocks of black screaming crows fluttered low in the air; they came from the gallows outside the town, waiting, with their reddened eyes, to be about their work here too.

Schott planted himself squarely in front of the victim of justice and observed him with a professional air. The congested blood had swollen the face of the strangled corpse into something bluish-red, huge and horrible, something no longer human. The body with

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its dangling arms, hung so utterly perpendicular that it looked as though it had already begun to decay.

A youth, who had clambered up on to the gallows-platform, amused himself by swinging the defenseless body from side to side.

CHAPTER XIX

GLAPION stood at the window of a small chamber and he, too, looked across the cathedral square at the pendent corpse. A noise of violent voices rang out from the Hall of the Electors near-by; and from the Hall of the Princes came an even greater tumult. There the princes were debating the Count of Nassau's claims to the city of Katzenellenbogen. And from under Glapion's feet rose an excited murmur; on the ground floor the Envoys of the Free Cities were sitting in Council. They were highly incensed against the Bishop of Hildesheim, who, in spite of his seven counties and his twenty-one castles, would not surrender the land he had seized from the men of Wolfenbüttel. The City Council was also in session.

With his gaze fixed on the body of the late city fisherman, Glapion reflected that all the power on earth was assembled in that house, and yet that power was not united. It was uneasy; it felt unsafe; there were brawls over territory and money—they all strove to keep each other down. It seemed as though they did not trust this power, as if the sole anxiety of each and all of them was to be as strong as possible, when they came to blows.

They were in the grip of fear.

They robbed each other; and all accused all of out-

rage and injustice. Every man of them wanted to be in the right. Was there no common right for each and all of them? Could that, which was so weak, be called power? Could such power rule the world?

Reason and reflection would have put those here assembled far beyond the reach of the unhappy monk, and yet, since he had been in the town, all had been a whirl of confusion. In all these dealings, in all these almost unimaginable vacillations of these great instruments of power, the poor monk was the tongue at the center of the scales; the ultimate decision hung on him and not on the Princes.

How was that possible?

The Carmelites, who went in and out of the *Johanniterhof*, had described the monk's demonic eyes; they had told with breathless amazement how he looked like one of the prophets of the Old Testament who gnashed their teeth and stood victorious against the mightiest kings and against whole peoples. Were the words of the Bible now to be fulfilled? It was said that many a devil had risen up against him out of the earth, swooped upon him with a hiss and a flutter of its pointed wings, but the monk had broken all their necks at a blow or set his foot on them and crushed them. He was alleged—was he not?—to have said that blood would flow in streams through Germany and the world. The Emperor's astrologer spoke of a comet foreboding disaster that shone in the sky at night.

There came over Glapion an onrush of that feeling of remorse of which he had so often spoken in the

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confessional, which had been so impressed on him in his training, and which had hitherto been to him but an empty word; now it was here, he felt it within him.

It was a terrible, yet indescribably blissful sensation; sadder and sweeter than any he had ever known.

Glapion understood; Luther had come here as the accuser, as the fulfiller of vengeance. Not the Diet, nor the highest spiritual and worldly powers were the accusers, but he, the solitary, weak, helpless monk, indicted the powers of the earth and summoned them before his judgment seat. He was there in the name of an angry God to demand a reckoning of His unfaithful servants, who possessed no authority for the positions that they claimed.

The Church did evil, and the princes did evil, and Rome protected them, enthroned above them all and responsible for what they did.

So must it have been when Christ appeared before His judges. There too, worldly power would have made His way smooth. Christ had only to say the two words, "I recant," they had even begged Him to say them, and put them in His mouth, but He would not. He died, and conquered them all.

Then it was a poor carpenter's son; and now a poor miner's son.

Glapion shuddered.

His limbs began to give way; he buried himself in one of the leather-covered chairs. He saw on the wall the oil painting of the Bishop of Worms and the wooden crucifix that hung above it. The dangling creature

across the square and the crucified figure had just the same martyred limbs. Peter, too, had been a poor man and a fisherman. The arms of the City of Worms on the Bishop's picture displayed Peter with the Key and the Book—the Bible for which Luther was fighting. The keys were the badge of the Pope.

Thick threads of sweat broke out over Glapion's body. Not a doubt, there was a God and there was Justice, and an eternal cycle of events. "Watch and pray, for you do not know when the time shall come. See, I have foretold all unto you. The sun shall be darkened, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Glapion cried aloud and flung a tormented glance up at the silent window; thunder growled in the far distance.

The Franciscan could hear booming in his ears the words: "The Son of Man shall be put to death but when He is dead, He shall rise up again on the third day." It was reported that Luther had said, "If they put me to death, my word will rise up."

Glapion wanted to leap up, to burst into the Hall of Princes, break into their debate and cry, "You shall not kill him."

He fell back with a groan from the edge of the abyss into reality once more. There were diseases of the soul that made a man possessed. It had been said of Christ that He was possessed. The whole need no physician, but the sick—so the Savior had preached.

Glapion could hardly move; his legs had parted company—they seemed no longer to belong to him, as though they had changed places. In the neighboring

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chamber the princes were shouting and disputing. The Saxon was roaring like a bull.

"You are no Christians. Christ had not two forms, He had only one head and one body, He does not give himself both in the spirit and in the flesh. Do you not see whither we are moving? The house is on fire, the flames are rising and you will not put them out because your own rafters have not caught."

A fist crashed down onto the table; Frederic's usually calm and comfortable voice took on a shrill, tense, despairing tone.

"You are wicked men, I will not let you steal my salvation from me."

"Would you lose your country?"

"I would not be damned. If my monk knows the right way, then I shall take it; and you must take it, though it costs you your land, your people, your lives and your bishoprics."

"Be reasonable, Frederic."

"I know I am beset. I know I am a prisoner, and that I have been too long a cowardly slave. My land is small and weak, I can do nothing against the Emperor and yourselves, but I see through and I despise your evil ways."

"Hold your mouth—or by my word I'll cut you down."

"I am ready."

"In God's name then."

"Peace, peace," the others shouted. "Separate them."

Swords clattered to the ground; and there fell a sudden silence.

A supercilious voice broke in:

"The Princes, Lay and Spiritual, are assembling; the most noble Electors, Lay and Spiritual, are likewise invited to enter his Majesty's presence."

Embarrassed pushing back of chairs; hurried, confused bustle and departure. The Hall of the Electors gradually emptied.

Glapion, whose face was white, unlatched the door. The chairs were scattered in wild disorder: the table had been pushed aside, and from the overturned ink-stand, dark drops dripped and a dark stain spread over the polished floor. A black glove with a red cross, an archiepiscopal glove, lay on the threshold grasping vacantly at nothing. Glapion passed, as though he were devoid of weight and substance, into the Hall of Audience.

On each side of the throne, under the golden canopy, stood the electors and princes in their gorgeous robes. Frederic stood well to the fore in the front rank, with a sunken, aimless look on his fleshy face. The rest stood with defiant, tense expressions, determined to work evil. And he—he, Glapion—had so advised.

Gattinara came. The brain behind that arched, dark-skinned brow was active and intent.

All bowed; the Emperor appeared, walking with hasty nervous strides, and accompanied by Chièvres.

Karl ascended the daïs and sat down on the raised throne.

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Vast expectant silence. What was the meaning of this sudden summons? There was uneasiness on every face. A flash of horror passed across Glapion's mind; would the Emperor now bring to pass what he, in his cowardice, had counseled.

The Chief Marshal, arrayed in black and gold, struck the floor imperiously with his staff and commanded silence. Karl raised his hand.

Chièvres stepped forward and spoke in a soft, and, as it seemed to Glapion, uneasy voice:

"His Majesty has summoned the Lord Electors and Princes of the Holy Roman Empire because the Most Reverend the Lord Nuncio Caracciolo desires to communicate a personal message from the Holy Father of Christendom in Rome to the Roman King and to the Princes of the Empire, Lay and Spiritual."

A flush of pride appeared in Karl's pale cheeks; and, with a rustle of his magnificent robes of gold and silver brocade and red Atlas silk, he said in a measured voice:

"I am ready to receive the message from the Holy Father of Christendom."

The men-at-arms, who stood waiting to the right and left of the entrance, with their brightly colored wide breeches, spears, and pointed steel helmets, flung open the doors. The mercenaries fell upon their knees and bowed their heads.

Caracciolo, in the violet robes of a high ecclesiastic, entered. Behind him appeared Aleander's contemptuous face.

The game was set for the last move.

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Caracciolo crossed the hall with great composure, and bowed before the Emperor's throne.

Karl rose, removed his jeweled silk cap with its white, waving ostrich feathers, and bowed his knee before the Pope's representative.

Caracciolo looked round him, and raised his hand with a gesture of command. All the electors and princes kneeled. He gave the papal blessing. Karl came down from his raised throne, bent down and with protruding lips kissed the hem of Caracciolo's robe: then he put his cap, with its great ruby, back on his dark hair, and with his pearl necklaces swaying and clicking, amid the clatter of the princes rising to their feet, he returned beneath his canopy, and sat down on his golden throne once more.

Chièvres hurried after him. Gattinara and Aleander now stood in the places of the gentlemen-at-arms who had left the hall—on the right and left of the entrance.

Caracciolo gazed into Karl's uneasily expectant eyes; and he began to speak, very calmly.

"The Sovereign of Christendom has the warmest affection for your Youthful Majesty. The Holy Father in Rome is well aware of your Majesty's distinguished virtues, and your Majesty's wealth and power, far surpassing that of all other earthly kings, for the maintenance of the true faith in its ancient splendor."

Gattinara took particular note of the words "wealth" and "power." The Genoese bankers were asking twenty per cent since yesterday.

"The Diet of this glorious and mighty Empire," pursued Caracciolo, "will presently be presented with the spectacle of an insolent heretic, excommunicated by the Holy Father, venturing to appear before the Protector of our Holy Roman Faith, who is the instrument and agent upon earth of our Holy Father in Rome."

This was pointed.

"It has never happened," went on Caracciolo, "that a person whom the Holy Father has ejected from the community of the faithful, has won the favor of the lay power in so great a measure as this heretic, who, through the goodwill of the Emperor, is to be once more allowed to reconsider his erroneous doctrines, so that, notwithstanding his proved obstinacy, he may save his life by the recantation of his heresies."

Karl's expression was full of agonized consciousness of guilt, and readiness to make amends.

"The Searcher of hearts," said Caracciolo raising his voice, "Who knows all happenings and all secrets, is aware of the joy with which the Holy Father thanked the Giver of all favors, when he learned of your Majesty's solemn promise, that your Majesty would regard it as your most pressing duty to impose peace on the enemies of our Holy Roman Catholic Faith. The Holy Father in Rome is convinced that the greater the power bestowed upon you by the Creator, the more humbly will your Majesty comport yourself to God's representative. Your Majesty owes greater reverence and greater obligations to the Apostolic See and to the

Holy Roman Catholic Church than do all other nations."

"Long life to the Holy Pope," cried the Spaniards from their seats in the Council of State.

Caracciolo smiled softly. His eyes gleamed sharply for a moment at the young Emperor, whose mouth was opening to defend himself.

"All your Majesty's difficulties," went on Caracciolo in a paternal tone, "are overcome, if your Majesty will renounce all vain desires, if your Majesty will but set your mind on the Lord God. Your Majesty is given power against every kind of heresy from the King of all Kings."

Karl got up. His knees were almost giving way beneath him in his anguished desire to do what was required of him. His fingers twisted convulsively round the chased gold hilt of his dagger.

"If your Majesty indeed accomplishes what your Majesty has vowed to the Holy Father, then your Majesty will have fulfilled the most exalted duty that can fall to the lot of an earthly prince; and the King of all Kings will bring many far scattered lands into your Majesty's obedience, and truly make his Empire the mightiest on earth."

Gattinara raised his head; this was an open threat.

"I will do so," cried Karl, and raised his right hand in token of an oath.

"We hope in the name of God, our Lord, that you, Carolus, will prove yourself in heart and deed a grateful and devoted son of the Church, and that you will

do your utmost to deserve and to maintain the love and goodwill of the Holy Father in Rome. That this may be so is the desire and the message of the Holy Father."

Karl sprang down the steps of the daïs. Standing close opposite Caracciolo he stammered out in a tone of almost supplication:

"All my ancestors were until their death true sons of the Roman Church. They have constantly defended her sacred usages and her hallowed ceremonies, and the Holy Father at Rome. I am determined," cried Karl, and turned sharply round, "to proceed against the Saxon monk as a confessed heretic."

Karl roughly pushed aside Chièvres' thin, vainly clutching arm; and his voice went on hurriedly:

"Am I not born of many Most Christian Emperors? Were not all the kings of Spain and all the dukes of Austria always the most devoted servants of the Holy Father? By my salvation, I will obey the Pope."

"Your Majesty has not only taken an oath to the Pope, but to us," cried the Pfalzgrave of the Rhine, with his clear, open face. "Your Majesty swore to us that you would maintain peace and justice in the German nation."

"True enough," cried the young Pfalzgrave of Hesse. "That was what your Majesty swore to us."

Pale as death, turning with a cat-like liteness, Karl faced the objectors.

The Pfalzgrave of the Rhine laid his beringed hand on his breast and bowed deeply and respectfully. He spoke with an inflexible, clear voice:

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"Your Majesty's dispatch to the Saxon monk was that he would here be heard by impartial judges, and that he would only be condemned if he refused to recant in their presence."

In high excitement Albrecht of Mainz pushed forward in his red Cardinal's robe.

"I would humbly suggest to your Majesty that justice will go further than force with the German nation."

"A pox take you, brother," cried the Brandenburger.

"Peace! do not anger his Majesty. You know not what you do."

"Elector of Brandenburg," cried the Pfalzgrave of the Rhine in a mighty voice, "do not revile your brother for speaking words of conciliation. Your intrigues with France are more dangerous to his Imperial Majesty than justice in German lands."

"Who cares what I may do?" roared the Brandenburger, with his menacing face and brutal eyes.

"The German people," retorted Frederic's friend.

"Enough of this," cried George of Saxony, pushing between the two and forcing them apart with his elbows. "The heretic must burn, but Rome must moderate her demands for money and surrender her courts in Germany."

Caracciolo felt a touch at his back. "Let the fools quarrel," said Gattinara, "the monk must go to the stake, but only if you make an alliance with us against France. Let the boy go," he added, in an irritated tone, for Caracciolo gave a great start and lost his composure

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as he saw Karl, with white lips and head held arrogantly high, followed by the imploring, gesticulating Chièvres, leaving the crowded, buzzing room with quick, obstinate uneven stride. "He has his nurse with him. In return for the heretic's life, we ask you to abandon France at once and join us."

"The execution of the heretic is your duty."

"If the Pope gives nothing away, he will soon be reduced to saying his own Masses."

"And you will lose your throne."

"And your Pope will then be as poor as his predecessor, St. Peter. Come, Glapion."

Gattinara withdrew from that turmoil of voices.

Groups were forming in the Hall; there was much furious shouting, and shrill tones of fear; the tumult was rising.

With long, determined strides, Gattinara was pacing up and down his room. Then he stopped and looked the pale confessor in the eyes.

"The abscess is ready to break. We must clear up this business. There is no longer a majority in the Diet for the heretic."

Glapion half raised his hands in dejection.

"The people will not move; local risings will be put down. Or do you think otherwise?" said Gattinara imperiously to the other. "Do you agree with me?"

"Yes," muttered Glapion hoarsely.

"Do you think that the peasants and the knights will revolt?"

"My lord," said Glapion, in a weak, toneless voice, and with a languid movement of his arched hand swept aside everything that Gattinara said or could say. "This is not an affair of to-day or to-morrow."

"The knights and the peasants are on bad terms; they will not combine for any purpose. If necessary, I can turn them against each other." When Glapion shook his head in disagreement, Gattinara concluded in a tone of much decision: "There is no unity in Germany; only a fool believes in it."

"This is more than the monk's affair," whispered Glapion almost inaudibly—and his face was like that of one mortally sick. "You are fighting against the Holy Ghost, of whom it is written: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'"

"If you, too, have gone mad," replied the Great Chancellor in a tone of reproof, "I begin to get some notion why your penitent talks so hastily and thoughtlessly. Your salvation is your own private affair—I have other things to think of. The position now is that the Emperor must hand the monk over to Rome whether he recants or not, or try him himself. So the problem before us," said Gattinara, looking reflectively at the floor and beginning to pace up and down again, this time more slowly; "the problem is, to find some other means of forcing the Pope into an alliance with us."

He stopped and contemplated the shattered Glapion.

"If the monk recants, it will be a difficult business.

"Do you think he will recant?" asked Gattinara, in a quick, sharp voice; his eyes were troubled.

"No."

"You are convinced he will not recant."

"He will in no circumstances recant."

For one instant, Gattinara smiled. Then he again became impenetrable, and said in his former brusque, penetrating voice, "I was always of that opinion. If the heretic does not recant, Rome needs us to exterminate the heretic's followers. The Germans will then not grant us the money for our coronation journey to Rome; it will, accordingly, be even more important for the Pope that the Emperor should visit him, and should keep order for him in Germany. Excellent!"

The door swung noiselessly open. Caracciolo entered quickly but circumspectly; for an instant the excited tumult of voices in the palace was audible. Then the Nuncio abruptly closed the door behind him; he did not want to be seen from without.

Gattinara's eyes glowed with satisfaction. "We parted with some unfriendliness just now, my Lord Chancellor," began Caracciolo; "and that brings me here."

Gattinara sat down on a chair; his tall broad form towered above the back of it.

"I am glad you come with such a purpose," he replied.

"Our Holy Father in Rome has always known," said Caracciolo quietly, "that Habsburg is a better champion against the Turkish menace than the King of France."

"The German estates are on the point of refusing you the levy for defense against the Turks."

Caracciolo bent his head forward as though there were a hand at his throat.

"The Germans will not grant the money for the journey to Rome so long as the Pope is against the Emperor."

Caracciolo gave an agonized movement of the head.

"Moreover, the friendly German princes and the representatives of the Free Cities feel burdened by your avarice. More than two hundred thousand ducats, all of it being the profits of labor in Germany, has found its way to Rome, and a third of the land here belongs to Rome. That is what has ruined the Empire. Even Duke George and the Lord Elector of Brandenburg desire that these abuses should be righted. These princes are the most loyal supporters of the Pope, and they have the overwhelming majority of the Diet behind them."

Caracciolo looked shaken.

"It was, and for the moment still is, my intention to make a show of setting up a commission to consider the grievances against you, which should achieve nothing and disappear after the Diet had risen. But I shall only do this, if you conclude an alliance with us, so that we can at last deal with the monk. Otherwise I shall allow these matters to be publicly discussed in the Diet and a decision taken."

Caracciolo stood in an attitude of increasing dismay. His shaven beard shone blueish through his flaccid,

sunken skin; and there was a stricken look upon his face.

"The Holy Father in Rome has hitherto held fast to France on political grounds."

Gattinara liked the word "hitherto."

"The Holy Father in Rome," went on Caracciolo wearily, with frozen lips, "has not hitherto been sufficiently aware of the young Emperor's religious zeal. He would prefer to drive the French out of Italy forever, but his despair over the young Emperor's troubles in his own land forced him to speak fair words to France."

Gattinara turned with an abrupt movement. "Are we to conclude an alliance with France against you?" he asked. "Are we to move on Rome with German money and with German and French troops?"

"I have full powers, Herr Gattinara, to abandon France and negotiate a treaty of some kind between the Empire and the Pope."

"In return for a draft treaty we offer the proscription of the heretic."

"The treaty shall come into force as soon as the Diet here has, without prejudice, decided for Rome."

"As soon as you have sent the draft treaty to Rome we will proclaim the proscription of the heretic, and postpone our grievances against Rome."

"The draft treaty shall be sent to-day."

Gattinara got up; he stood like a gigantic, victorious cock facing the spectators, when his enemy has fled, torn and screaming from the fight.

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"As soon as the treaty is signed, we will fall to exterminating the heretics."

"We must insist, my lord, on your declaring war on France: the Father of Christendom must, by your agency, again become the only Ruler in Italy. But," added Caracciolo, throwing down his last trump with a malignant flash in his eyes, "supposing the monk recants. Then we shall not need you and your alliance."

"We are moving in a circle, my Lord Nuncio. Even if he does recant, that will not exterminate the heretics, nor get any money for you that we will not give."

Caracciolo acknowledged defeat.

Gattinara turned his head. He sprang aside like a cat; but it was only Glapion who had crashed on to the floor. The little Franciscan had collapsed with foam at his lips, upturned eyes, and twisted hands and feet.

Gattinara walked circumspectly past the prostrate figure and summoned one of the chamberlains.

"Let us go into the next room, meanwhile," he said.

He drew aside the tapestry curtain and, with a friendly smile, let Caracciolo, looking like a stark, stiff mummy in a violet robe, pass out before him.

CHAPTER XX

A HEAVY silence still brooded over the *Johann-iterhof*, though it was but the outward semblance of silence; the corridors indeed were empty, and no one was to be seen at the windows, but behind all the doors was a hum of muffled voices and cautious animation; there was movement in every room, in every closet. It was like some fortress secretly preparing a sortie; like skirmishers, appeared here and there pale, drawn, questing faces; figures moved noiselessly from the garden up the steps to Luther's door. First one, then another entered.

Whispered conversation; others, tense and expectant, listened.

And he who passed out, with the face of a man who has seen the light, would hold the door-latch for the newcomer.

Those who came from Luther's presence were old men and young men, citizens, knights, priests and even Jews with the yellow patch on their shoulder that marked their outlawry; they left the house and stood in silence near the gateway, with wide, dilated eyes, and looked like some strange bodyguard. From time to time in that thronged multitude could be discerned a nod, a softly whispered word, a muttered greeting to those who kept on issuing into the street and crossed

over to the Imperial Palace, or joined the silent company in front of the *Johanniterhof*.

From the garden at the back, also, appeared human forms in ever increasing numbers, and among them were peasants, noblemen, and women.

The molten haze above grew hotter.

"It is enough," said Schurff to Luther. "You will utterly exhaust yourself. Remember that you may be sent for by the Diet at any moment."

"I must speak with the peasants."

Schurff looked mistrustfully at the two peasants who stood before Luther looking embarrassed, and enveloped in the odor of their moldering clothes-presses that reeked from their coarse garments; they stood as though they had some important business to discharge that would brook no delay.

"You do not know who are spies and who are your loyal followers."

"Yes," begged Amsdorf. "Be careful, collect yourself."

Luther bent sideways that self-willed, obstinate head of his, and repeated, with a flash of defiance:

"I will hear those peasants."

"As you will," said Schurff, reluctantly. The peasants looked at Luther and said nothing.

"Leave me."

This produced much shaking of heads and gesticulation, but no agreement as to what they ought to do; Luther accordingly strode determinedly to the door and opened it.

"This," said he, "is where the carpenter made the hole in the wall."

Hesitating and reluctant, with Kriechingen at their head, his friends then obeyed him; uneasy and indignant, they went. Luther shut the door behind them and turned.

"Say on."

The peasants stood up straight and smiled with clumsy familiarity. It was a proud malicious smile, full of satisfaction that here they counted for more than scholars, knights, and priests.

Luther ran his eye over their poverty-stricken clothes, their brown and gray home-made cloaks, their legs, marred and worn with toil, bound about with leather straps, and their rough weather-beaten faces. One was gray and his hair looked as though it had been nibbled by mice; the other had a growth of straw-colored bristly thatch covering his beetling skull, and beneath it a pair of dark-blue eyes. These were such figures as could be seen everywhere in the forests, under the hedges, and plowing the fields, or sowing and reaping; very strong, prone to sudden anger, and yet bound and paralyzed from within.

The elder man respectfully shifted his leather cap with its dangling strings from one hand to the other. The young one, with a short, quick movement, brushed the hair off a forehead that the sun had burnt dark red. He looked boldly and confidently into Luther's sternly set face, now fully turned towards him.

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"May the Lord Jesus, our dear Lord, greet you, dear Brother," began the older one.

"Praised be thy Gospel," added the young one. He glanced with a look of impatient encouragement at his hesitating, older companion.

"The peasant societies of the Black Forest and Swabia have sent us with a Christian and brotherly greeting."

The older man shook off his stiffness, and treading heavily with his iron-shod boots, moved nearer Luther. There he stood like a great white boundary stone ready to stand up against a landslide or a deluge. The old man went on in an undertone.

"We were to tell thee, dear Brother, to hearten and encourage thee in thy task for the common man in Germany, that we need thy Gospel, pure and undefiled, to help us to live and to die. And thy teachings shall keep us steadfast against princes, knights and priests."

Luther's face was impenetrable, but there was a vivid flash from beneath the curved bones of his brows as he answered:

"So ye do it with a good conscience, and God is willing, He will help you; I cannot."

Dismayed and baffled, the young one looked at his older companion. Then he gazed awkwardly with half-closed mistrustful eyes into Luther's face, now once more erect and impassive.

"God will preserve thee, Brother," said the older man, in no way discouraged by Luther's aloof attitude; he knew from his life of drudgery and oppression that all things come slowly: "God will deliver you for us,

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because we, like you, most bitterly long to conquer by His word."

From the street outside came an increasing scurry of footsteps; and from time to time the stray clatter of hoofs of some isolated horse. From near and far, trumpet calls blared out and died away.

The older man bent his iron-gray head and waited.

The younger man's nostrils suddenly swelled. With one stroke he pulled a rag of linen out of the leather satchel that hung at his hip, and stepping forward, he thrust it before Luther's downcast eyes.

"Dost thou know this?"

It was the peasant's token of revolt: the banner with the clog and the plow. The mysterious piece of linen, to possess and to follow which meant torture and death.

Quivering hands unfolded that crumpled persecuted standard.

Again and again it had fluttered here and there in the faces of knights and priests, who always beat the peasants down. But under the heaps of corpses, broken on the wheel, impaled, and burnt, the fire was growing and spreading deep and far, and clutching at the quaking hearts of the great ones of that country.

The peasants stared at the piece of linen, covered with brown dry flecks of blood, as though it had been a wonder-working talisman.

"We will raise once again the holy standard of the common man in Germany," said the old man solemnly, "this time in all parts of the land at once, and thus at last get justice as thou hast preached it."

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"Give up that fatal banner."

The two peasants seemed to lose their foothold and they felt as though they were plunging into some dreadful abyss.

"Dear Brother," began the older man in a gloomy, trembling voice, "thy name has made us one; we have carried thy message through starless nights, from farm to farm, into outlaws' dens, through rain and storm into barns and hamlets, and into pathless forests."

"Cast away that banner; it cannot save you."

"Art thou not, too, a peasant?" asked the young man menacingly.

The weathered lined face of the older peasant with its peaked nose, that seemed to suggest the beginning of the descent to death, quivered: "We wish, dear Brother, henceforward to recognize our Duke, Jesus Christ, and Him only, as our Lord, and obey and pay our dues to Him alone. Thou hast shown the way."

The old man pushed between Luther and his flashing-eyed companion, lest he might burst out.

"Did not our Duke, Lord Jesus, redeem us all on the Cross by His precious blood?" went on the old man, with touching faith; "and it is laid down in Holy Writ, as thou, dear Brother, hast rightly preached and written—for we have proved it for ourselves—we are not to be slaves, but free. When God created man He gave him power over all beasts, over the birds in the air, over the fish in the water, over the meadows and the woods and the fields. Wherefore we wish to have our share in all these things, and our power over them

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given back to us, in accordance with God's will. The lords and the priests have not bought this power; they have taken for themselves the manors, woods and streams, contrary to God's commandment, that says, 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house. . . .'

The younger man again made as though he would leap cursing upon Luther, but the other again thrust himself between them. Claspings his callous horny hands with their broken finger nails, he said:

"Every workman is worthy of his pay, as is written in the Gospel. There is no word in the Bible saying that priests and lords, when we have gone to our graves, shall take everything from our widows and orphans and drive them from the land for which we have lived and labored all our lives. There is no word in the Bible about the cattle-tithe, or the corn-tithe, nor that the priest's dues are to go to the Pope. Henceforward we will never suffer these levies to be made, nor let our lords continually put new burdens upon us."

The old peasant stood up straight. "Wherefore we have sworn oaths, and met together," he said in a clear voice, confessing fearlessly what they had done: "We have formed ourselves into companies and chosen leaders, so that the Divine Justice may once more enter Germany. Three hundred are in the city, and a thousand are posted outside it; and as we go on our way thou shalt find even greater companies, thick like fields at harvest time with spears and breastplates and swords. We want nothing but our rights as Christians, but those we must have."

"Ye have them now."

Luther folded his quivering hands behind his back and turned away from the peasants who stood, like men in heavy rain, motionless, with their arms hanging at their sides.

Luther walked to the window. He raised his head reproachfully to the firmament and looked up with sharp burning gaze at the sunless blue-gray thunderous sky. Then, as though he would not look at them, as though he found it hard to part from them, he turned away and began to pace up and down with out-thrust head.

The two peasants limped aside and stood stiffly watching.

Without looking at them and without stopping Luther said in a quick strained voice:

"Christians fight not for themselves, they fight not with breastplates and with swords, but with the Cross and by suffering."

"Shall we then go on enduring outrage and injustice," cried the younger man. "Must we always be hanged, broken on the wheel, and burnt?"

Luther went on pacing up and down, his head now erect, proud, and beyond persuasion.

"He that will not endure outrage and injustice is no Christian."

The old man seized his companion too late. This time his wild leap succeeded, and he stood in Luther's path. With his great hands half-raised, bent forward, so that his face was on a level with Luther's eyes, he

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cried out, "If such are Christian men let us rather be Jews."

Luther thrust the peasant aside. As he reeled back the latter realized that the monk had an arm as strong as steel. Luther turned and walked past the bewildered older peasant who had staggered against the wall and was groping for support with outstretched arms and legs; and his eyes had widened into two strange hollow sockets.

"Did Christ command us to resist evil, or did he say, 'thou shalt not resist evil?'" asked Luther in so soft and suppressed a voice that the two men, in sudden hope, rushed towards him. "Did not Christ command us to do good to those who wrong us? He commanded that we should pray for our persecutors and love our enemies. We are to do good to those who do us wrong."

There was a struggle in the old man's mind; it was clear that Luther was uncertain, that he was contending with his inmost self, with a contradiction that he found it hard to fight.

"Why, then, didst thou not go on thy belly to the Pope?" asked the young man contemptuously. "Why didst thou not treat the Pope according to thy precepts?"

The old man started back; tense and stiff he listened, and it seemed that what he heard was what he longed to hear: victory stood upon the threshold.

Luther bent his head as though it had suddenly grown too heavy. His broad chin sank into the white

cowl above his chest; he blew out his great lungs and strove for breath. His eyes were no more seen. It was as though he was struggling bitterly to tread down something that he had torn from his own self—trample it and destroy it.

The young peasant gave the old one a triumphant look that meant "We have him now."

"Never," said Luther in a thick voice that was almost like the gasp of a dying man, "have I said that I was not a man. I am . . . not . . . good, but"—here he threw up his head and glanced at the others in melancholy despairing wrath—"I strive to approach as near to goodness as I can. I am a coward, but I did not cross the frontier into Bohemia or Denmark; I am trying to win the Pope to better things, and therefore am I here."

He threw his head back and breathed deeply. His dark almost maniacal look made them recoil.

"Know ye," he said slowly, in a reproachful voice, "whether I pray for my enemies, and beseech God to shed Light upon them so that their hearts may be changed? I have often prayed for them, I am praying now, and not from fear alone; I have many times humiliated myself most deeply. In all the years in which I have had to bear witness against Rome I have constantly besought all the bishops and even the Pope not to bring ruin upon themselves."

His voice gained strength.

"Do I preach resistance and revolt? Have I not come here to submit myself to authority? I shall for-

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give them if they take my life; and therefore I can say," said Luther calmly, emphasizing every word, "that I strive to live in accordance with God's commandment. That must ye also do."

The peasant-envoys blinked. Their eyes were small and set awry; they tried to understand, but there could be little sense behind those narrow brows.

"Think ye," asked Luther, with a voice that now rang out full, "that I should dare to enter the presence of the mightiest of the earth if I did not know that my utter weakness would, as against them, be proved the plenitude of strength?"

The young peasant crept forward in a bent and threatening attitude, as though he would take Luther by the throat and fling him to the ground.

"Thou wilt doubtless soon be an abbot or a canon? Did the princes and the Romans pay thee so well?"

Luther flushed deeply.

"Fools! Did ye think I could not deal with such stupid, wicked fools? I knew—how should I not?—that all I had done and had believed had driven me into a trap whence there seemed no escape. God's mills grind far too slowly for us poor mortal men, but"—his face and his eyes lit up and glowed—"be glad," he cried, "that the princes and the Pope are against ye. That will be your just reward; for ye shall be destroyed."

The eyes of the older peasant glittered. "Away!" cried the younger one.

Luther's hand swept through the air.

"Equal fools are ye. Thou young clown—I have been bribed, have I? I would break thy head and let a few lies out of it, if God had not condemned me to humility."

"Brother," cried the old peasant beseechingly, "he only said it from despair, it was because thou wouldst not be our leader."

"The Gospel needs no armed hosts; it is a star that moves freely and goes victoriously on its course. Does the Gospel say that the peasants' will must be done, or that God's will must and shall be done?"

"But the Gospel does not say," cried the young peasant, "that the will of the lords and the priests must be done."

"It is written 'deliver us from evil,' it is not written we are to deliver ourselves from evil."

"It will be a thousand years before God has time for us."

"If ye cannot wait, then perish, unchristian ruffian."

"If we do not strike, then the knights and the princes will strike first."

"Let them; every blow ye deal them is a blow against yourselves."

The young peasant pulled out his knife. "If thou wilt not be with us, then we will do what must be done, alone, and against thee," he cried.

"Do what you may have the power to do, alone."

"Good," cried the young peasant in a wild gesticu-

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lating fury. "We do not need thee. Thou deservest that they should kill thee."

He seized the older man, who stood gaping and confused, and the two peasants went. Luther was once more alone.

CHAPTER XXI

LUTHER raised his hands convulsively, and slowly and tremblingly passed them across his forehead.

He looked down at his hands; they were covered with sweat, not blood. His knees sank beneath him so that he could hardly stand and his shoulders drooped. It was as though he had been on a broad, rushing stream, in a ferry-boat cut off on every side, released by the thaw and hurried downwards by the current that whirls it quicker and quicker round and slips away from under it. He stretched his clutching hands into the air as if seeking some support. But he was alone; all was vacancy; no sound reached him.

The murmur in his ears grew louder and more confusing; God's word became incarnate. It rose up before his vision with mighty legs like pillars, striding powerfully and imperiously over sea and land; a great tall form towered up into infinity, a dreadful face looked down upon him, lit by dazzling sunlight. It was the face of an angel, of a knight, a huge, long, shining, candid countenance with clear confident eyes, inexorable, unshakable, very powerful and strong and masterful, and all-knowing.

Luther collapsed and fell.

He lay heavily, legs bent, prostrate on his side. His

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hands were pressed against his head as if to cover and protect it; as though he had been struck and feared to be struck again and stunned.

Noiseless and slow, like a dappled gray and green toad with an injured hind leg, a motley gray-haired figure shuffled from a corner into the room.

Without a sound, the apparition crept up with a sort of malevolent curiosity and, bending its great bald head, peered down at the prostrate figure with sympathetic curiosity as though it wanted to suck Luther's blood, and was looking to see if he yet lived, and where it could best set its teeth upon his throat.

Luther did not move: he sank into a more and more huddled heap upon the floor, as though a pitiless overmastering hand were pressing him down from above, and the misshapen toad began to hobble round the monk.

Then it left him.

The Fool clambered onto one of the benches by the wall, crouched down gasping and sat with a veiled look in his great glassy eyeballs.

"Do you know what you are?"

No answer.

"Martinus!"

Luther's shoulders moved under the great carven folds of his cowl.

He let his hands fall and uncovered his face; he looked up.

They were the face and eyes of a dead man, rejected by the Beyond that would not receive him, but had

revealed to him its terrible majesty, its reality, its calm strength, the mysterious logic of its dynamic contradictions, eternal and inescapable; for Luther the curtain had been raised, and it was another man who came back to humanity.

"You are the fool of Christendom," said the Fool in a curt rasping voice from the depths of his misshapen chest.

Luther nodded vehemently; his yellow parched face was still without expression.

"Come," said Klaus, sprang up, ran across to Luther and held his fool's cap before his face, "put this on. We'll change our clothes and callings."

Luther suddenly came to himself; with quick, sharp movements he rubbed the palms of his hands downwards over his face and across his temples, as though to stir his blood and set his heart beating once more. He got up.

"Have you never observed what a man does," asked Klaus in a didactic tone, "when the horses in a cart will not pull together? He takes a whip and lashes them forward until they do. It is even more important to do this when the cart contains something valuable, or it will stick fast or overturn."

"Against whom are we to drive our cart?" asked Luther with surprise, but now quite collected.

"Against the princes; knock them over and upset their rascally game, so that only the Emperor of the Germans is left standing to rule over a united Germany."

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Klaus again came shuffling up to Luther, like an embodied warning, a tempter, a Devil in motley, and whispered:

"You can only conquer the papists if the peasants, citizens and knights hold together and fight on your side."

"I am no man for earthly politics."

"I can see that; indeed, you are no man at all."

After this observation, the misshapen gayly-colored bundle of humanity, on its pitiable weak legs, lurched softly round the room once more, puffing and blowing, full of muttered menaces and gasped-out sighs. Then it stopped and spoke:

"Who does not understand his time and serves it not, neither does he understand eternity. Only one may rule in Germany, the Emperor. The princes and the Pope must go. Blood must flow at every birth. Did not Jesus Christ say, 'I did not come to bring peace, but a sword'?"

"Go down from your pinnacle; tempt me not."

"You are acting against the will of God, who would use you to make Germany great, united, and powerful."

"It is not written in the Gospel that peasants and knights, that you or I, are to bring a sword. His kingdom is not of this world."

With a helpless, imploring look, his thin, twitching, drooping mouth between weeping and contempt, the Fool looked down on Luther with ever increasing dismay.

"God works through men. How do you know that He has not urged them to what they do?"

"If God embroils them with each other," answered Luther with slow emphasis, "then it is certainly His will to destroy them both; but I must preach peace to them—for that is my mission, and that I must obey."

"I have long frequented courts, and counselors and princes do not constrain themselves before me. It is my experience, Herr Doctor, that there is nothing that can be brought to fulfillment except by force."

"The Lord Jesus said, 'Guide our feet into the way of peace.'"

Dejected, in an increasing agony of disappointment, the Fool, with his smooth, bald head on one side, stared with an air of malicious expectation at Luther's obdurate face, now set for the final struggle.

In painful meditation, testing himself yet once more, reaching out to the furthest limits of his being, listening for an inner voice, Luther stared at the other, who said:

"Germany will perish unless you dare to act."

Luther drew a deep breath. "I came here," he answered, "because I could not escape the service that my Germany asked of me. But if she can only be delivered by blood, outrage, and yet more injustice, then she must perish."

The hunch-backed Fool stood straddling on his knock-kneed legs and bent his twisted body back. Still uncomprehending, and with an air of horrified alarm, as though expecting the monk to burst out into a fit of

madness, he stared into Luther's face; the eyes he saw were dark-rimmed, and flashed imperiously.

But, as the monk's inflexible attitude did not change, and he was seized by a fit of trembling that threatened to bring him down, like a whimpering child the Fool raised his pitiful long, thin, arms and laid them against his drooping eyelids with their thick, light-colored lashes, as though he could no longer bear to look.

Thus he stood awhile. His shivering and shuddering increased; he felt Luther's gaze fastened on him. With a desperate gesture of defiance the Fool let his arms fall and turned his head away. His stricken face had fallen in.

"You are a poet," he said softly, as though that were an accusation. "And you interpret Holy Writ as it pleases you."

Luther's blood surged up with a great onrush and swept into all his veins; his forehead flushed as far as to the disordered tangled hair at the edge of his tonsure.

He clutched his robe above his heart. Quivering, as though the sap of his life might burst his veins at any moment and fling him to the ground, he stood like a tower, in which too heavy bells are swinging. The veins on his bare round neck were in wild commotion; they were eddying with blood, which throbbed and then drove on in irregular bursts, stopped for a while, then hammered furiously once more.

He looked before him like a man distraught.

Then he raised an arm; his fingers felt for the Fool and found his shoulder. He shook him with an im-

perious, imploring hand; there was still a troubled, contemptuous look on the Fool's face as he swayed in Luther's grasp. His reddish eyeballs looked dusty as though they had been veiled by a dull gray film.

"It is God's command," said Luther mastering himself, "'seek and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'" He relaxed his grip and the Fool staggered. He tried to soothe the old creature by stroking the drawn skin on his skull. But only for an instant, as Klaus started aside in something like disgust.

"Believe me, I have knocked very hard; my knuckles are bent and I cannot unclasp them, but I go on knocking. However it may happen, Klaus, whether my way is right or wrong, it is not my own way. It is God that sends me upon it. Not my will, but the will of God is done. Am I in fault? Do I go astray? Do I see one side only? Am I still too hard and disputatious? I often have a shock of fear that it is so. Well, then God may take away my life; he may destroy me and then no harm can come to you through me. I must be as I am. . . ."

Luther was silent.

"So you do not know," asked Klaus in a trembling voice, "whether you are guided by God or the Devil?"

Luther then felt his last strength leave him. He sank back sideways and, like a blind man groping for support, stretched out his hands beneath his bent head, felt his way along the wall and fell back on the chest on which the Fool had sat.

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The Fool looked at him and tears welled up in his eyes.

There was a roaring in the Fool's throat and chest. He put his hands up to his neck which felt shrunk, and he could hardly draw his breath.

With a quick imploring movement he rushed at Luther like a man who will not lose his last support, flung himself at his knees and embraced them in an agony of penitence and despair.

He groaned and then began to sob uncontrollably.

Luther raised his hand above the old man's head, so pitifully bowed before him. He stroked his cheeks soothingly, his shoulders and his arms first slowly, as though from an obligation to be sympathetic, then more quickly, in exhortation and encouragement.

In an exhausted whisper the Fool spoke, blurting out his words.

"Jesus wanted to reform his fellows—they crucified Him. You want to—reform us—and they will—burn you."

He raised his haggard face, quivering, utterly devoid of hope.

"What kind of a world is this? Who is right?" Luther bent lower and touched with motionless lips the Fool's almost polished bald skull.

"They make a pigsty of everything," muttered Klaus, and raised his tear-stained face questioningly to the monk; "and they will do the same by your doctrine, and God . . . allows . . . it . . . all?"

"God knows what is needed; He carries on the world

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as He thinks fit. Humble thyself—humble thyself utterly.”

Luther rose and leaning against the chest at his back to give himself the necessary strength, he took the old man's hands and gently raised him to his feet. The Fool nodded gratefully, licked the tears from round his mouth and swallowed them greedily, as though they gave him strength—as though they were a precious possession that he had won with difficulty.

Then he took Luther's stiff cold hand, and gripped and pressed it, turned and crept noiselessly through the room to the door, through which he disappeared.

CHAPTER XXII

LUTHER twisted and untwisted his fingers, so that the bones almost broke; then, raising his eyes, he spoke aloud:

“The madness has gone from me, Father. O God, my support, aid me against the stumbling reason and false wisdom of this world. Aid me against myself. If I err, then let me not stand fast against the learned men of this world. May my body be destroyed, if Thou dost not speak from my mouth. My soul is not lost, it is Thine, it belongs to Thee and remains with Thee.

“Thou knowest, Father, that I have tried to go the right way. What I could, that have I done.”

He was silent.

He did not hear the growing tumult in the streets, nor the roll of the thunder-clouds that fought out their battle across the Rhine. He looked up and listened.

All was still. No voice rang out from above; no encouragement—no inspiration.

“Dost Thou not hear me, O my God?” he asked with upturned head; “art Thou dead?”

He shook his head in reproach at himself. “No, no, Thou canst not die. I know that, for Thou art Eternal Life. Thou dost merely hide Thyself. Dear God, be not angry. If I am wrong, the fault is not Thine,

it is the fault of my own weakness, but Thou must believe that in my heart I do not err. With my heart I see and feel Thy way."

He looked at the door. Human figures were in the room; he thought at first they were the men from the furnace, or the Executioner's men come to drag him to the stake. He watched the strange, quick movements of their legs and arms as the group surged nearer; a student, a monk in a white habit, Kriechingen, Schurff, Amsdorf, Spalatin.

Anxiously thrusting forward his haggard face, wiping the sweat of fear that poured down his forehead, out of his eyes, the Councilor of the Elector of Saxony stepped out a little in advance of the rest.

Luther turned with a slow, powerful, swinging motion.

"Martin," cried Spalatin, pale and struggling for breath, "what did the Fool want?"

"Say to Herr Luther what you have to say to him," urged Kriechingen.

"Yes," shouted the student.

"What were you saying to the Fool?" asked Spalatin mistrustfully.

"Herr Spalatin comes from the Diet," shouted Kriechingen into Luther's face, by way of explanation. They all watched him with a look of uneasy expectancy.

"You did not allow yourself to be drawn into any promise to the peasants?" asked Schurff, urgently.

"What have you to say, Spalatin?"

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"Yes, speak on," urged Kriechingen once more.

"We must first know what he said to the peasants," persevered Schurff.

Luther thrust his head forward maliciously: "Do you think," he said abruptly to the lawyer, "that I am a poor creature of a peasant that you can frighten with your legal rubbish?"

"Martin!" implored Spalatin.

Luther opened his eyes so wide that his forehead was seamed with wrinkles.

"What does the foolish Diet want with me?"

As Spalatin still hesitated and the agitated and officious Schurff looked like opening his mouth once more, Luther broke out: "What do you want?" Then he smiled apologetically and, embarrassed at his own vehemence, he lowered his voice. "Why do you shuffle your feet so, Spalatin?" he said with an attempt to propitiate the other by a joke. "You pant like a little horse whose harness is too heavy."

"O God, I feel like one," stammered Spalatin, and wiped his forehead.

"Speak then," urged Kriechingen.

"Speak," shouted the student angrily to Spalatin.

"What did the Fool want?"

"We agreed that I, too, should be serving as Court Fool to his Grace the Elector."

They looked at each other in mystified uneasiness and then once more at Luther.

Their knees shook, Luther shouted: "Oh, what ails you all? I know they want to burn me! Let them!"

If you're too weak to bear it, go! Poor shrinking fools!"

A deep, mysterious, iridescent blackness appeared in Luther's eyes.

"The Imperial Confessor has . . ." began Spalatin.

"What does the swine want?"

"No, no . . ." said Amsdorf, deprecatingly.

"Listen, before you make up your mind," said Schurff, pompously. "You have not much more time."

"Speak, Herr Spalatin," implored Amsdorf.

"He brings an important message," shouted the old monk.

A mistrustful, stubborn expression showed itself in Luther's countenance. In a sudden burst of overstrained anxiety Spalatin blurted out:

"I came here, although it was not easy. All the streets and the squares are full. I hope my coming will not be reckoned against the Lord Elector."

He stopped short under Luther's burning gaze.

"Pardon my speaking of myself. Herr Glapion confided to Brück—"

"The Frenchman's tales are fairy tales."

"Do but hear it," cried Amsdorf and Schurff.

"Listen!" cried the old monk angrily.

"I thought so at first," said Spalatin breathlessly, sparing his scanty breath by jerking back that lean, clever lawyer's head of his, and swallowing carefully between his words; "but this time he is sincere. He is quite changed and much distressed. He sends his greeting."

Luther burst into a roar of laughter.

They all stood in desperation. Their raised hands, lately so vivid in their gestures, fell, and their moving lips were stilled; the meaning looks faded from their staring eyes.

Luther came up to them and thrust his head forward, as though he carried some burden round his neck. He looked up at them with an air of something like malice, and a broad spreading smile, which completely unhinged them and robbed them of what remained of their courage. He gloated over their discomposure, their fear and their dismay.

"Did not Judas kiss our Lord when he betrayed Him?"

"Be not presumptuous," cried Spalatin in horror. What would be the end if their friend behaved so before the Diet?

"But I am presumptuous," cried Luther, with the full strength of his lungs. "I would have all the devils against me. I would leap upon them and crush them all down once and for all. How I long for that fight!"

He spread out his arms on both sides like mighty wings and broadened his shoulders and lungs for the conflict; and with a mighty gasp drank in a great draught of that hot air. Then he brought his arms to his sides and hammered with his fists upon his chest until it echoed beneath the blows.

"Send all Thy devils against me, Lord!" he shouted

until his throat almost burst; "all the devils against me; I am ready for them all."

As though they had been roped together in a line, so that when one moved the others must move too, they all drew back before Luther's fury. With a sense of crashing, unruly joy he felt their uneasiness at this tremendous power that God had given him. Now it was in him. With mocking glee and an expression of glowing mastery, drawing new strength from the disapproval and distrust so plain upon those faces.

He raged before them like a *landsknecht* disguised as a monk, greedy to fight, to shed blood and to break men's bones. He saw on Schurff's brow the narrowest, most arrogant pedantry. Did that man mean to help him, did he imagine he could support him in his trial? He was a learned man, of course, he knew German law and Roman law. Pitiful rubbish!

When he was sated with his friends' uneasiness and indignation, which gradually grew to a perplexed despair, he made a final contemptuous gesture of his hand and turned away—a gesture that implied "I despise you. Be easy, you are too stupid, you could not understand me, you are not to understand me: I do not care—I would rather have it so."

Schurff then observed in a formal and reproachful tone:

"Herr Glapion confided to the Chancellor Brück that the Emperor has already decided against you. He is in agreement with the Pope."

Luther again turned towards his friends like a bull

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stayed in its course and now attacking in earnest. His great head was bent and thrust forward. With his small, bloodshot eyes he flashed a malicious glance up at the lawyer.

"You should wear a petticoat."

"Martin!" cried Spalatin and Amsdorf once again in a tone of helpless reproof.

"Would you frighten me?" asked Luther, in a deep, threatening voice. "You, my lawyer?"

Spalatin bent his head hopelessly and signed to Amsdorf. He and the monk and the student were staring at the ground. That was Luther's way; the deeper he fell into difficulty, the more alone he became, the more desperately everything collapsed in ruins about him, the more bitterly he rejected any human help.

"The Elector desires you to be told," went on Schurff calmly; his forehead was still flushed at the insult to his profession, though his cheeks were pale, and quivered, "that you must be very modest in the presence of the Diet and be very careful what you say."

"I suppose he desires me, as a subject of his, to give some instances of his singular good sense?"

Then Spalatin gave up everything for lost. There was no holding Luther now. No word of reason would avail with him, he would treat all advice as malice, meanness, treachery, insult and cowardice. Now he would sweep over everything like a disastrous fire—destroying himself and all that might be in his way.

"Does the melancholy fool think I had the Gospel from him? Does he think he can stand in the way of

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God? Does he think I came here to take advice from him and his fellow fools?"

Spalatin and Amsdorf raised their arms imploringly and in vain at the end of every sentence, each one of which fell more vehemently on the heels of the last.

"Any pox or blain can wipe him out, but not me. None but God can wipe me out and His power works in me, but not in you. My life belongs to God and not to you."

Luther looked at them; now none of them understood him any more; now there was no way back, and he was shaken; but the wild, dynamic force within the man drove him to even more violent outbursts.

"I'll throttle all recreants!" he cried. "Does His Grace think he is God's protector and adviser? I have higher than human authority for what I have to do. I do not need your counsel."

Spalatin pulled himself together. With all the strength of his narrow lungs he burst out:

"We only want to protect you, Martinus."

"Yes, to protect you," repeated Amsdorf and the rest beseechingly.

"I need no help. God does not need you. Christ was no man of straw. Heaven sent me, so that I might protect you from your own selves, from your pitiful cowardice and godlessness."

"What, then, shall I say to our Lord Elector?" said Spalatin, ignoring this outburst.

"Tell him to leave me in peace. I cannot help him if his faith is so weak. He must go to his own place."

Suddenly Luther's voice sank.

"Do you not see," he said in a half-whisper full of the bitterest shame, "how you insult me? You are troubled for my fate and yet you say hard things of me. You tell me I am no true Christian, when . . . I . . . strive . . . so . . . hard to become one."

His voice again became abrupt and harsh. "A true Christian must bring consolation to every man and harm to none."

In a tone of sad reproach and with quivering lips, like a child who has been unjustly treated and grows helpless and dejected before bursting into tears, his voice died away.

"You know not what you do." He looked at them with a mournful, reproachful and weary expression. They no longer trusted themselves to speak.

Luther's face stiffened into calm: it now looked colorless, like a thunderous sky in which the storm has burst and the blue sky is timorously trying to come through; and the sunshine is not far distant.

"Tell your Elector," he said in a kindly voice to Spalatin, "that he is guiltless if I should be put to death. He is not to be concerned and nor must you, and you are all guiltless. Spalatin, come hither." Luther seized him, now alarmed once more, by the wrist and pulled the half-resisting, half-consenting little man so sharply to him that he began to struggle with terror.

"I would have you tell the Elector, Spalatin, that he is not to lay any obstacles in the way of their taking

me and killing me. No Christian should resist force. Every kind of force, even if in our poor vision it may seem so utter an injustice, is sent by God for some purpose that will prove sometime to be profitable. Trouble not God in His work. His will be done."

"Martin," Spalatin said, much affected, and raised his hand.

"Go."

Luther, with the palms of his hands turned outwards and his sleeves drawn up, motioned the other to keep away, so that he should take no harm from that fatal proximity. "Go," he repeated: "Go."

Then he covered his eyes with the backs of his hands. His demonic, ravaged look had vanished. His fingertips quivered against his forehead; he felt faint.

"Tell the Elector," he said without lowering his hands, "that I shall hold him guiltless."

He let his arms fall: his eyes became visible once more—and in them was a reddish glow. "Whether you believe it or not," he added with renewed vehemence.

"Our Lord Elector merely meant," insinuated Spalatin timidly and sympathetically, "that you should be cautious."

Schurff had at last overcome the insult to his profession. "The Lord Elector," he said, and he spoke with a great air of candor and dignity, "will not allow you to be judged without a hearing, as those crafty Romans have arranged."

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"He who truly loves Jesus Christ always calls down the hatred of the world upon himself."

Luther's voice again became dark and angry; and again it seemed to come from far within him.

"When a human creature will not allow a thing, it always means that he intends to hinder God's purpose for the sake of his own peace of mind. But God desires the battle and the tumult—always remember that. All else is false."

Luther's voice again rose to a rasping shout.

"God has ordered us to take up our cross and bear it."

They looked at him timidly and nervously, yet now with a kind of faint admiration—sad that they could not be like him, and dimly suspecting that he was fed on essences they did not know.

"O, this hard-hearted world," cried Luther, and looked up as though certain of God's complete agreement; "O how pitifully have they lied about Thee and Thy Jesus."

He looked down once more, like an angry prophet who bears the whole responsibility for the progress of all souls upon earth.

"Not the sorrow that we seek, only the sorrow that comes to us against our choice and thought, is the true cross. And if ye bear it willingly and humbly, God comes to you; otherwise, he will not come. You can only be blessed when you take your cross upon you."

"Blessed are they who bear suffering," Amsdorf began to pray with great earnestness, and the others

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unconsciously clasped their hands and prayed with him.

Schurff had not clasped his hands. In his own mind, he hurried along the ways of justice, up and down; he nimbly bent at every milestone, read it and ran on. He must keep his head high, if all the others failed: and once more he said: "Be not hasty—that is all."

Sadly the others let their fingers slip apart. Amsdorf's voice died away. "Did not Jesus say to His disciples: 'Ye shall stand before the mighty ones,'" asked Luther, standing erect, "'but it is not ye that shall speak but the spirit of My Father from within you'?"

"They will first ask you whether you acknowledge the authorship of your books."

"Do not daunt me; if you would abandon me—then go."

Schurff made as though he would speak again; but they all turned to him and their urgent, imploring looks begged him to be silent.

Luther raised his upper lip and bared his teeth in contempt.

"You open your mouths wide enough," said he; "and then you tremble and are silent. You are strange Christians. If I looked to you, all would soon be finished. I should but have to hear my sentence and depart."

"It is possible," began Schurff once more, rising on tiptoe so that he could see into his client's eyes, "that they intend—"

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"No," cried Luther clapping his hands over his ears; "No! I will not listen."

His cheek-bones seemed to broaden and swell; his brow heaved up and outwards to his temples, and the eyes grew huge and round as though inflated, or as if some inner force were thrusting them forth until they were like to burst. A wild exaltation, full of the lust of battle, flashed from him like a broad ray of dazzling light, and in that glare the others were no more seen. Then, like a burst of glowing vapor from a crater, like the roar of a mighty organ pouring out the music of the world, came his voice; his hands still clapped to his ears, and, rocking himself from side to side, he cried aloud in the cadence of a chant:

"My soul is Thine, ever Thine, it belongs to Thee; I abide in Thee, I am forever Thine. Thy will, Thy will be done. Thou hast awakened me, Thy words rise within me, Thou art in me, I am stronger than all the world, because I stand helpless before all Thy devils. Thou hast set them all against me and I thank Thee, I thank Thee. Thou art great, Thou art strength and power, Thou art Majesty."

They did not know whether they were dreaming, or alive, or whether they were dead and standing before God, seeing the Heavenly Light and listening to the angel choirs. A stranger had appeared and was standing near by, a pharisaically dressed, evil-looking but distinguished personage, in black silk with a gold chain of honor round his neck and a gilded sword at his side.

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Was he also summoned? Was he, like they, awaiting judgment, or was his case disposed of: had he been admitted to their company? Were they all these their brothers who began to crowd into the room, as though all men upon earth were making their way upwards to the height upon which they stood, far above the clouds?

“Herr Doctor, the time has come. His Imperial Majesty and the Diet await you.”

They all fell in confusion back to earth, and were men once more. But they had seen the heavens opened.

Where was heaven’s messenger?

Before them stood a monk in a broad white cowl, short, with crooked hunched shoulders, pale as death, like a living skeleton, his eyebrows drawn with fear.

Cold shudders shook him and wafts of chilly air seemed to freeze his legs and feet, as though they stood in ice; as though the ceiling of the darkened, stifling little room was hung with lowering storm-clouds from which a mighty hailstorm had burst upon their heads, and the floor was spread with ice.

The Hereditary Imperial Marshal von Pappenheim was a man of arrogant mien. He raised his small, well-kept hand and the lean monk turned and went; with both fists clenched he strode through the door and, close at his heels, the entire company followed him out.

Kriechingen forced his way to Luther’s side. He held his sword raised, ready for a cut or thrust. He

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felt as though Luther, before he left the room, had said silently and softly, but from the deepest conviction of his heart, like a sort of challenge to his enemy whom he now realized stood before him full-equipped for battle: "I am ready; strike!"

Amsdorf, with anguished face and stricken with deadly fear, his habit drawn tightly round him, also pushed his way forward. It was like a procession to the scaffold.

"Put up your sword, Kriechingen." It was Luther's voice in a tone of calm command.

"This will not do, my Lord Marshal," thundered Sturm's harsh voice, "if we open the gate they will burst in and trample us to death. They have already broken down a wall just opposite."

For one instant they all stopped and stood motionless.

Then they realized; thousands upon thousands of human voices held the house encircled, and round it and above it poured that din of talk and shouts and cries.

It was as though they stood upon a deep, deserted ocean-floor and above their heads surged and swirled in endless *chorales* the fullness and the might of the eternal waters.

Once more with his legs apart and his mighty frame thrust forward, the Imperial Herald tried the door; it was no use. The people were so thickly huddled against it from without, that many strong arms and as many heaving backs as could find room upon it were

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needed to shut it again and thrust back the surging mob; the heavy oak panels cracked beneath the strain.

In a perturbation of uncertainty, the State Marshal wavered. His usually ruddy face was pale and indignant. What was all this? Such a thing had never happened to him before. He had been separated from his attendants and his heralds. He stood like any clerk among a pack of common citizens. Worse than that; he was standing beside a man who had been banned by Holy Church, a declared heretic.

"Perhaps we could get through the gardens," said a voice. Luther turned and went down the stairway to the garden some distance below. In a huddled mob, that kept him safe yet would not let him go, they all turned and pressed after him, some from devotion—others from mistrust.

Luther walked firmly on. Whether from respect or fear, that thronging crowd of reeking, panting, stamping humanity always left a small space clear immediately round him.

CHAPTER XXIII

LIGHT—the light of day; but dull and lusterless. The *Johanniterhof* vanished; before his eyes was space—trees, green lawns, tall chimneys, barns—red, gray and yellow—stables and the sky; bushes with damp leaves sparkling with dewdrops. A farmyard full of men crossing and recrossing it. Gardens once more, over whose neat, but still empty flower beds, clothes lines were suspended; and from them, like shrouds frozen stiff, dried by the heat, hung sheets and cloths of all colors and shapes; they were steaming—it must have been raining.

A few shouts and cries rang out distinct and shrill across the roar of breakers; as though from outposts announcing an enemy, or the approach of help. They came from men astride upon the roofs, clasping chimneys, leaning out of dormers, standing on the sills of outbuildings and bedrooms, clinging to the cornices and turrets of the larger houses, that look down from the neighboring streets across the less lofty outbuildings into the gardens. Among the shouting, jubilant figures on all these points of vantage, peeped out light-colored thatched roofs, red tiles, and a huddle of dim blue-gray or dark-gray slates, shimmering with a faint yellow iridescence from the reflection of the sky with its sulphurous, yellowish thunder-clouds. The sultriness

had gone, as though dispelled by the shouts of the mob, which, now warned by its outposts, surged forward, turbulent and invisible, and gave tongue from every side in answer. Soft, green, half-opened leaves hung down motionless and parched-looking to the steaming earth.

A long garden fence gave way with a crash under the pressure of the broad front of that marching throng. They passed over it and on. The scolding screams of the women, lamenting their gardens and their flower-pots, was drowned in the roaring surge of shouting from crowds seen and unseen.

Above the encircling walls of the broad gardens behind the *Johanniterhof*, which reached almost as far as the Bishop's palace, appeared tiny, quickly clambering figures. First heads, then shoulders, then the whole body. It was a storming party from all sides pouring into the defenseless garden-land. More and more people scrambled over the walls, jumped down and ran towards Luther.

The Hereditary Marshal von Pappenheim stopped short; he felt worn-out and disgusted. Suppose the heretic took to flight, suppose the mob rescued him and carried him off. He could not prevent it. He abandoned his dignity and, oblivious of his rank and origin, he began to hurry after the small throng that surrounded Luther which, with Sturm at its head, swept over stairways and storeyards, poured over strips of garden and leafless orchards, ever pursued by the black, swarming, color-splashed crowds of humanity surging

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up from every side, who saw and wanted to touch Luther.

On a distant wall stood a tall, erect figure. He was slowly waving a piece of linen attached to a bean stem; the banner of the secret league of peasants, with the emblems of the plow and the clog.

Schurff urged Luther on. They made their way again through a house and then again through a garden. And then it came about that Luther stopped and raised his hand, pointing in glad admiration.

Their bloodshot eyes peered in the direction of his hand. They thought he saw an angel coming to his aid. It was but the pink-flecked foliage of a peach tree flowering before its time.

"On, on!" cried Schurff.

"On, on!" cried Pappenheim, panting. "If they overtake us we shall never reach the palace. Bar the doors behind us."

Again through a courtyard, another and another, full of carts and wagons in scattered confusion; then down a long, dark, evil-smelling passage packed with people whom they thrust aside; then a door crashed open and they plunged into daylight—before them was the square by the Imperial Palace, black with wedged humanity as far as eye could see.

There the city men-at-arms fell upon that mighty centipede which, now broken asunder and scattered, filled the interstices between every house, whose body was made of human bodies, and its head of multitudinous heads from near and far. Spanish soldiers

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laid about them ruthlessly and the great bell of the cathedral boomed in angry tones over the surging square. From one distant balcony some one began to throw huge consecrated tapers down upon the mob, which at first was quiet, and then began to brawl and fight. Luther was rushed by armed men along some by-alleys which had been cleared of the mob; a man fell from one of the high steep roofs down into the crowd, injuring many and breaking his own neck; the throng shouted and screamed but pressed forward in curiosity; water streamed on their heads from the gutters of the Bishop's palace far above; and amid all this turmoil, Luther reached his journey's end.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE little group stood, gasping for breath, in the half-darkness of the sultry Bishop's palace.

At last, after some delay, the Hereditary Marshal found his voice.

"Sturm."

"My lord?"

"See to . . . the heretic."

The Marshal disappeared. The others slowly clattered up a small stairway leading up and out of the side entrance through which they had dashed into the palace.

Here the scene was much like that outside.

Here too was a press and throng of men; but these were other than those without. Here pride stood, or paced up and down—and arrogance, presumption, power and force; lords, knights, counts, princes, dukes, ministers, councilors, lawyers, city-envoys, chamberlains, ambassadors, deans, canons, priors, prelates, cardinals, abbots, bishops and archbishops. Outside was Life; here was that dead thing called Justice.

Sturm bored his way through the throng. The corridors were strewn with sand, now trampled and scattered and tossed with designs as though by a playful breeze. And the feet that made these constantly chang-

ing figures, were slim and heavy, large and small, shod with iron, cloth or leather. There was an incessant coming and going of men clothed in silk or velvet, or clad in armor; they slipped noiselessly on their ways, or stamped and crashed along, hurrying like enormous ants in Spanish, French, or Italian shoes with long pointed toes, or with squat, iron-shod feet, broad in front and with spurs at their heels like those of gigantic cocks.

The suits of armor shone and sparkled, gorgeous with gold and silver. The work of Italian, Flemish, French and Spanish armorers rattled, clinked and glittered. Splendor upon splendor; precious stones, rings, chains, medals, colored hose, boots embroidered and edged in yellow and red, sandals black and brown, robes, cassocks, white feathers, herons' tufts; motley swaying, nodding plumes above faces short and small, long, broad and thin; above caps and helmets; and above beards of every size and cut—large, small, narrow, broad, and long beards reaching to the navel; mustaches long or thin, smoothed or curled, pendent or twisted into points at the side, fair, dark brown, gray and snow-white; smooth, shaven faces, pale faces, red faces with bushy brows and sturdy noses; aristocratic noses with acid, arrogantly drawn lips and contemptuous eyes; toothless mouths, and teeth bared in empty laughter; red lips; hair short, hair long—hanging to the shoulders and overshadowing the brows, or smoothed back from foreheads flat or round; wriggling, dignified, slinking, strident men; eyes far and near

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apart, eyes slit-like, almond shaped, bulging and sunken—eyes of all colors; blue, brown, gray and black. Raiment of many hues,—red, yellow, white, green, violet and again red; the mighty ones of the Church.

They stood isolated and in groups, talking or sitting silent upon chairs apart; they all turned their heads as the excommunicated monk came in and walked past them with perfect composure as though he were alone and they were lifeless blocks of stone. Anxious, pondering, malignant looks followed him; no one spoke to him and he spoke to none: he received and gave no blessing.

When they reached the great staircase leading to the Hall above, an officer approached them and said:

“Wait here.”

The monk, surrounded by his escort, leaned against the wall. It was cool and vaulted. Behind him was a pilaster, bearing the whole mighty staircase, reaching up to the roof. Luther breathed quick, short breaths—the air round him was stale. It was full of all manner of pleasant odors—of the fragrance of many costly scents and lotions: but it was hot, dusty and tired.

He shut his eyes and let his head fall backwards. He stood as though he had been bound to the pillar for his sins.

All the languages of the earth buzzed about his ears. Voices—high and low, voices melodious, harsh, whispering and noisy. A leaden weariness came over him. He felt dissolved, as though he had lost the essence of his being.

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He stood in that gigantic den of thieves, where the world meets together and where that world's weal and ruin are bartered and bargained away.

"The Free Cities have not agreed yet; they are still sitting," said a voice near him. "Those swinish shop-keepers are always on their dignity."

"Is it true that the Emperor is going to hold another investiture to-morrow in the open air?" asked another voice.

"The Bavarian and I are staying away."

"Is the Hesse-Baden business settled at last?"

"The Spaniards want to eat up Württemberg as well."

"Greedy brutes!"

"Lauenburg and Schaumburg-Lippe will not give in; nor will the Duke of Lüneburg."

"Take care; the Englishmen are looking across at us."

"Why are the Pfalzburger and our friend of Minden always with the Danes?"

More and more voices joined in.

"Five thousand horse and twenty thousand *lands-knechts* are too much."

"The Emperor can put into the field ten thousand Swiss and six thousand Spaniards, apart from the light horse."

Luther opened his eyes.

It must be like this in hell, he thought; outside the gates of the Last Judgment. Age and youth flowed past him—bald heads, red heads, tonsures and Bishop's

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miters. Cows brown and black and white—his own Order; they did not look at him.

Luther again let his head fall back and closed his eyes.

The strands of talk became more interwoven.

"Have you got open ulcers or are only your bones swollen as yet?"

"We only contribute to the Supreme Court now the Princes have given way."

"The chief council has rejected the subcouncil's decisions."

"The Emperor has granted a close investigation of our grievances: the Great Chancellor is already forming a commission."

"Baths and physic did me no good."

"We counts will only agree if we are treated in exactly the same way as the princes."

"They kept me wrapped in hot blankets for a month: I was only allowed to eat once every ten days."

"The Lord Cardinal of Mainz is against it."

"You must drink an infusion of guava; it is excellent for a flux."

"Since when have our peasants had a say in the matter?"

"It is abominable that there should be so many priests on the Council."

"Our reverend Bishop says that the only thing is a grease cure."

"In Rome they swear by fomentations and white lead."

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"They demand money from every Bishopric they possess; when the Bishop changes three times in a year, then it costs just three times as much."

"Who has to pay?"

"I can't think why we are so poor."

"Why should pepper and other foreign spices be imported? And foreign cloths. Have we not our own?"

"The banking houses get rich on it."

"I shall soon get only blood from my peasants. If the Emperor does not put things in order soon, I shall take service with the city and become Captain of the Guard at Ulm."

"Doctor," whispered Schurff imploringly into Luther's ear, "do not utter a word that might betray that the peasants were with you; and do not say anything of the offer of the knights of the Rhine."

"I assume," replied Luther, bending his head to one side with his eyes still shut, "they will at least speak to me of One who seems to have no part in this assemblage."

Schurff threw a perplexed glance at his client, who still refused to open his eyes. Luther's words were contemptuous, and on that veiled face he could read nothing but contempt.

"Be careful; when they ask you a question only answer when you see that I am not going to speak."

Schurff was silent; two vigorous voices burst out beside him.

"An admirable Vice-Regent of God! Instead of his helping us, we have to help him, and pay and pay."

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"Herr Pfalzgraf, for God's sake," replied an anguished voice: "I beg you to be more moderate; that is a gross insult."

"If a man looks like strangling me, I defend myself."

"You may not break the peace, my lord."

"I shall keep it only as long as I wish—not a moment longer. Is this justice? They promised the Priory to Stollberg and took the fee for it. They took the same fee for the same Priory from the son of my steward, who is a scoundrel. At Speyer they made a thirteen-year-old boy Provost of the Cathedral because his father had given all his property to Rome."

"Herr Landgraf!"

"They took Havelberg away from me," broke in another voice; "although I was unanimously elected. My successor has never said a Mass in his life. I should have remained excommunicate, if I had not paid the brutes some more."

"Yes, that is what they always do."

"They threaten every one with hell who does not serve their will."

"They are blackmailers—blackmailing scoundrels."

"How can it be otherwise, when they settle the choice of the Electors, and the Emperor must depend on them."

"Noble Lords, be careful: there is the Lord Cardinal of Liège."

Luther opened his eyes. The discontented gentlemen fell silent and mingled once more with the motley

crowd, whose many-colored dresses produced a dull, gray and ghostly effect in the half-darkness. A monk in a brown habit strode forward. He fixed Luther with an insolent, inquiring glance.

"What do you want?" asked Schurff. He and Kriechingen thrust themselves in front of Luther.

"I want to ask the Brother," said the monk, keeping his right hand in the folds of his cowl, "why he has insulted our Holy Father in Rome."

"Take your hand out of your cowl," said Kriechingen, pushing the monk back.

"Why there is the noble knight who could not sleep for thinking of his sins. Have you joined the heretic?"

"Enough," said a broad-shouldered stranger, pushing his way out of the yellow, white, golden, blue-green and red-clad throng. As the monk did not obey, he gripped him by the shoulder and pulled him round abruptly. He put his hand in the fold of the cowl and came on something which the other bent forward to try to keep and conceal. The knight raised his hand aloft and displayed to the bystanders a four-edged stiletto.

There was a sudden silence.

A harsh clamor rang out from the Council Chamber of the Envoys from the Free Cities.

"Fetch the Guard," cried Schurff, with a flushed face.

No one stirred. It was as though fear of his fellows held every man back. Then several detached themselves from the groups in front of Luther and his

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friends; they went off to the left and disappeared round the corner.

Gradually the crowd began to relax. A fair-haired, red-cheeked, handsome youth in a very rich Spanish dress advanced from the background, swaying self-complacently from his broad hips like a young turkey-cock, smiling and swinging his shapeless puffed and flowing sleeves; he went up to Luther and offered him a beringed hand. And he spoke intentionally loud:

"If you are right, Doctor, may God help you." Anxious, in his boyish arrogance, that every one should see what he had done and hear what he had said, the youth peered about him from under his cap, edged with three thick ostrich feathers, red, white and blue. When he observed that a deepening and increasing silence of astonishment had fallen on the company, he said even more loudly:

"Doctor, I like you."

So saying, with his sword thrust out behind him in its gold-studded flashing sword-belt, tapering like a sharp thorn or the sting of a venomous wasp, the smirking bedizened youth walked up the broad staircase to the Hall, swinging the long tips of his shoes, with deliberate movements of his shapely legs, full of satisfaction and delight at the astonished respectful silence of the company behind him.

"Why did the heretic insult our Holy Father?" screamed the detected monk in the painful grip of Kriechingen's fingers.

"The Pope is not a private person," said Schurff,

roughly: "Hold your mouth; you will soon see there is no place for the like of you here."

He peered about uneasily to see if the guard were coming. Suppose the numerous monks who had suddenly appeared and surrounded Luther fell upon him and flung him to the ground and strangled him? The atmosphere was very hostile. With his left hand Kriechingen grasped the would-be murderer; with his right hand he held the others off with his sword. Suddenly Herr von Schott came upon the scene. Looking like a tame monkey in his blue silk dress, he mimicked the gait of the handsome youth who had preceded him and came mincing up to Luther.

"Well, Martinus?" he said in a patronizing tone. His carefully prepared majestical expression vanished from his face and he stared in amazement.

Luther stood leaning against the wall looking as though none of this concerned him. His gaze was raised high above the eyes of all those who stood before him, like one who will not see the turbid whirling depths beneath him. He stood like a man sunk in a mire, calmly trying to emerge from its filthy embrace, until at last he must either be engulfed or until the clinging enemy is defeated and gives way in dust beneath him.

"Do not lose heart," advised Schott; "if the Landgrave of Hesse thought you deserving of so friendly an address then all is not yet lost."

With a high indignant look Kriechingen measured the little knight from his head to his heels.

"Yes," repeated Schott, and grew even more pom-

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pous; he suddenly forgot his hostility to the princes, "the lord who spoke to you so condescendingly was the Landgrave of Hesse, who attends the Diet with no less than six hundred horses."

Herr von Oberwindt thought himself an object of admiration because the other was the rich Landgrave of Hesse.

At last the tramp of the guard could be heard clashing on the stone pavement. In surly, malignant tones, with looks full of anger and hatred that ill disguised their prejudice against the monk, they bade the Lutherans follow them.

"Take him to the wheel," shouted a voice.

Then the Captain of the Spanish guard turned and, bending forward with black flashing eyes shouted into the crowd of nobles: "Burn the heretic!" That was the cue. From above, near the entrance to the Hall, where the Spaniards had posted themselves so that they might be sure of admission, came a wild chorus of shouts over the balustrade.

"Burn the heretic; burn him!"

Kriechingen and a few others made ready for an attack: they flung the would-be murderer in the direction of the doorway; the guard followed.

The hubbub of talk began once more, livelier than before.

"Ha!" cried Schott. "Ha! Martinus, wake up." He stared eagerly into Luther's broad face with its unseeing gaze that looked far beyond him; he glared imperiously into Luther's eyes as though to force them

down to meet his own. Suddenly another monk appeared.

"I am ready," said he to Luther, "to dispute your errors with you publicly. I will prove your doctrine erroneous word by word, if in return you will give up the protection of your safe conduct."

"I will give you safe conduct with a sword," shouted a knight; and the tempter hurriedly burrowed into the throng and disappeared.

"Perhaps it would be best," whispered Schurff, his thin face twitching with uncertainty, "to leave everything to the estates. After all they are Christians."

Luther dropped his eyes and looked at his lawyer reprovingly. Schurff wagged his head and began to squint.

"If you explained to the estates," he stammered, "that you only preached and wrote for the establishment of Christianity"—he felt greatly ashamed but he saw no other way out—"if you inform the estates that you were prepared to withdraw whatever they might find contrary to the Faith, you would not compromise yourself."

"Yes, Martin could do that without dishonor," observed Schott, who had only half heard what had been said, with much emphasis, and an air of paternal consideration.

"Cursed is he who puts his trust in his fellowmen. I must follow God and not you."

And Luther again turned his gaze away and upwards. Schurff drew in his breath; he knew Luther

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was right; but he felt hopeless. Schott shrugged his shoulders in commiseration. Then he strutted up the stairs exactly like the young Hessian. Every one of his slow sweeping movements betrayed that he was delighted to feel himself the center of attention, or at least that he hoped that many, if not all, eyes would be upon him, comparing him (not to his disfavor) with the rich Landgrave of Hesse.

Schurff turned and hastily bent his ear to a gentle-looking short man with a pointed beard wearing doctor's robes, who was standing close beside him. Then he turned and whispered excitedly:

"The Lord Archbishop of Trier would speak with you."

"If Doctor Luther will open the door near which he is leaning," said the secret envoy softly, "he will find himself in his Eminence's presence."

Schurff's gaze wavered, he dared give no advice. Luther turned half round and looked down. In the thick wall was set a small door; he turned and grasped its iron latch.

"Be cautious," whispered Schurff, just as Luther disappeared.

CHAPTER XXV

IT must have been a lumber-room built there in the thickness of the mighty wall. The air in the little enclosed chamber was stifling. No window, no dormer—cobwebs everywhere. On an upturned cask stood a candle burning, as though kindled by some ghostly hand; it flickered redly, eager for air. A few broken fire buckets, a couple of twisted oven-rakes, collected from the episcopal kitchens, leaned in a corner. Two besoms lay on the beaten earthen hearth.

Not a sound could be heard from without.

The walls were wet. It must be raining. Was there a storm? Or was it blood? The decision was at hand; perhaps it would be given in this room.

Another door, no doubt commonly used by lackeys and servants who flung their rubbish in here, opened; and a broad, powerful figure came in, arrayed like a saint in a picture. He wore a flat green hat with a broad brim on his massive red-haired head, and green cords and tassels hung dangling on either side.

For an instant the Elector of Trier stopped with a look of surprise—and anger. Did the Augustinian refuse him the obeisance that was his due? He did not even bow; he gazed at the Archbishop with composure and even arrogance.

Then the Archbishop turned away; he was looking

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for some place to put his hat. As though to calm his mind, he peered up and down the uneven, roughly whitewashed walls. When he found a hook, he gazed up at it reflectively for a few moments, then he hung up his broad-brimmed hat and watched to see if it would hold. It was as though the mighty Prince of the Church had laid aside his rank.

Luther noticed on the Cardinal's head, barely hidden by the close-shaved hair, two bony scars—mementos of feuds or some other knightly sports.

The Cardinal turned half round and looked at Luther with a knowing expression on his healthy, vigorous face.

"Let us sit," he suggested. He looked round him drolly and smacked his pursy lips. "It is not agreeable here; but you say in your writings that God forsakes no Christian man, not even in the privy, though this is not as bad as that."

The Cardinal pulled his long voluminous robe close round him and, with outstretched legs, carefully lowered his heavy military frame onto a stool, which a servant's hand, that disappeared forthwith, respectfully pushed up to him from behind. The Cardinal sat down cautiously, with legs wide apart, so that the frail object should not collapse beneath him. And he said to Luther: "Sit down on that pair of steps—it will serve your purpose."

Luther sank obediently on the edge of a pair of steps that lay sideways on the floor; he moistened his dry lips and looked his Elector's friend in the face.

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Herr von Greiffenklaue, one of the ablest captains in the empire, looked appraisingly at the pale monk as though at an opponent in a boxing match; and the monk returned his gaze quietly and calmly.

The Archbishop of Trier noticed, not without satisfaction, that the rebellious Augustinian was a genuine peasant, even if at the moment he looked like death. But he had clear eyes that hid more than they revealed.

A look of approval spread over the Archbishop's round beardless face. His light blue wine-congested eyes, that strenuously maintained their place in that mass of overnourished flesh, glittered like those of a man short of breath, as he began to speak:

"It will not now be long before you must appear before the Emperor. It may cost you your head, but that is no matter; there are plenty of heads in Germany."

He waited to see whether the other would in any way openly or even indirectly object, or contradict him; or whether he would venture to say that there was a certain shortage in Germany of such heads as he still carried on his shoulders. Not a word. In the monk's eyes, now veiled and remote, was an expression of something like agreement.

"What is much more important is," pursued the Cardinal, "that your blunderings should not produce any schism in our Holy Catholic Church."

"That is truly not my purpose, my lord," answered Luther warmly. "God forbid that it should come about."

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The Cardinal folded his short sturdy arms, tense with powerful arched muscles, and looked pleased. "Do you know what you are?" he asked. "You are a brainless blockhead. Do you really think that you can overthrow Rome, the greatest power on earth, and God's representative here below?"

Luther bent forward and looked down; it seemed as though the man himself had disappeared and that it was his disembodied voice alone that answered:

"All things may be overthrown, and constantly are so, my lord. Only heaven and its commandments may not be overthrown."

The Cardinal looked at the monk with rising interest. He was not quite sure about him; he had had too much to do with priests who all used fine unctuous language. Was this one different?

"You are a visionary," repeated the Cardinal.

"Would you also call our Lord Jesus Christ a visionary, my lord," asked Luther, and raised his eyes, "because He was ready to die for the truth of His teaching?"

Ah, now he had him. The fanatical little monk wanted to become a martyr. That was it. Another instance of the eternal stupidity of ill-nourished and unbalanced monks.

"So you think yourself the equal of our Savior?" asked the Cardinal.

Luther's mouth grew tense, the muscles at the corners of his lips twitched, and his expression, that he had controlled hitherto, darkened.

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"Is it right," he retorted, "that you should presume to speak to me with such assurance, because you wear round your shoulders and chest a white woolen band covered with black crosses, for which you paid much money to your underlings in Rome?"

"Come," said the Cardinal in a conciliatory tone, "I would not offend you. But tell me, must you drive matters so far; must the whole business now come to a head?"

"Do you not know, my lord," asked Luther in a wondering tone, "that it is not the will of men that has driven matters thus far?"

"A man can only drink wine when it is contained in a glass or in a cask."

Into Luther's eyes there came for an instant a flicker of something like uncertainty.

"One and a half thousand years are a long time," went on the Cardinal quietly, "and yet our Holy Church still gives us the same wine of the faith as our Lord Jesus Christ left it for us. Do you think that this faith could have survived if it had not been set down by the Holy Fathers, and thus preserved for us?"

"The wine would have kept better by itself."

The fleshy contours of the Cardinal's face hardened. This was not the monk that had been described to him, whom he had half hoped to meet. It was an enemy, who did not evade him or try to escape, but sought for battle and faced his enemy like a bear at bay.

"God's word is eternal," went on Luther with increasing confidence, "but Rome's laws were drawn up

by human hands, so they are uncertain, transitory and may not endure."

"I hope you know, Martinus," said the Cardinal in a reproving tone, "that our Holy Father in Rome is Christ's successor? What we bishops do is not done by human hands but is of divine origin. Surely you know that?"

The Cardinal started, as Luther spoke once more, sitting joyfully upright.

"Do you really think that by the touch of a mortal hand at your priestly consecration you are raised above all other men?"

"If you utter such a blasphemy before the Diet, you are lost."

"The claims of our priesthood, who have officiously, arrogantly and selfishly thrust themselves between God and the faithful, are the chief cause of the estrangement of our Church from God," answered Luther. "Rome's vessel has sorely spoilt the divine wine. You know what you mean, my Lord! You mean that the form is more important than the content. That sounds convincing but it is false. What is eternal cannot be wholly embodied in what is transitory. God's eternal essence carries its own eternal form within it; it needs not our aid. The common man may be a lewd fellow, but in his heart beats the eternal. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that very well and taught us so, my lord."

The Cardinal jerked his head as though he had a hiccough.

"Rome has shaken her wine-jar and turned it upside

down so often, that a great deal of the divine wine has been lost," Luther went on, "and if we do not restore our holy Catholic faith as Christ Jesus left it us, then the last drop of wine will soon have vanished from that jar."

The Cardinal sat bent forward with both his fists clenched on his knees as though he were in pain, and he said in a tone of vacant dismay:

"You are certainly a vile heretic."

"Or is it our Lord's commandment," asked Luther, "that your lordship should ride on forays wearing armor and carrying a sword? Did you get those scars on your skull from fighting for the purposes of God? Did God command His servants to make war? Did He command the Pope to maintain an army and continually stir up the princes and the mighty ones of the earth to bloodshed and outrage against each other? I have not yet heard, Herr von Greiffenklaus," concluded Luther, "that the Pope and your Grace strike so vigorously for spiritual gains as you do for money, lands, villages and cities. Do you think that such a priesthood should put themselves above the faithful who wear other clothes than you?"

"Boldly spoken; but go on. No one hears you; you may say what you please."

"Christ did not establish Rome," pursued Luther, "He only charged His Apostles to carry His word over all the world. Our Lord did not say that He was infallible, He said that only His Heavenly Father was so. But Christ's successors make themselves equal to God

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and put every one to death who will not accept their idea of what is sinful. Is that the love and the humility that the Lord Jesus demanded?"

The Cardinal swallowed audibly.

"Christ did not create His saints by the score," Luther went on, "one for toothache, another for gout, a third against fire, and a fourth for pregnant women. He was not always haggling and thinking of His own advantage as you do, nor did He allow His help to be sold for money, or let earthly usages decide whether or not He should bring a soul into the Father's presence. He did not fight with the weapons of fear, threats and murder, and He did not say that man could earn God's favor, or even buy it, or win it by a mass of babbled prayers."

He sat with a threatening glow in his eyes.

"So you purpose to destroy everything that has been preserved until to-day, everything that our fathers believed."

"Can you say it has been preserved when to-day there are practically no more Christians, when it will soon be openly known that men can only be and remain Christians by means of money? God's favor is an inward matter, my lord—forgive me if I tell you this, but you apparently are not aware of it—God's favor is not won or refused by the agency of men, who, moreover, often became priests merely from indolence because they were fit for nothing else."

The Cardinal was horror-struck.

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"Are you on such terms with God that you know everything He wills?"

"He who believes in God in spirit and in truth, my lord, finds the ineffable blessing of direct communion with God; he is always in peace and certitude, for he may utter every word that Christ uttered, as it is set down in our Holy Writ."

Herr von Greiffenklau choked as though a large crumb had stuck in his throat. His bulging eyes grew larger and larger. First they became angry and malignant, then glazed, then something like a veil dropped over them, a kind of respectful fear against which he struggled in vain.

Luther's bare neck stood out strong and sinewy against his rough, backflung cowl.

"My lord," he said in a tone so calm and untroubled that it seemed impossible that any moment he might be summoned before the highest judges on the earth who held his life in their hands, "is it not a grievous thing that our noble faith has been so distorted by human folly and greed? Have you really all forgotten that our Lord Jesus Christ bitterly lamented that all men did not come to Him? Shall we not set His grief at rest, when He sees that at last all men desire to come to Him?"

The Cardinal's great cheeks quivered. He looked like a stupid, unruly schoolboy—sitting there with his head on one side as though at any moment he feared a well-deserved box on the ear.

"Did not our Lord Jesus command us," asked Lu-

ther, "to love all other men more than ourselves? Ah, I beseech you, my lord," he said earnestly, clasping his hands, "help us, so that our dead faith may be restored to what it was."

The Cardinal cleared his throat; he felt that he must get plenty of air into it before he could answer; then he said in a husky voice:

"If you must lose your head you will be of little help."

"Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friend, Herr von Greiffenklau."

"And so," said the Cardinal, with an unsteady glance at his adversary, "you call the Holy Father and us—your friends?"

"Do you think," returned Luther simply, "that I should have striven so desperately until now if I did not call every man who could serve God my friend?"

That was a thrust through the joints of the armor. The monk was dangerous; here was a much keener brain than Herr von Greiffenklau had suspected.

The Cardinal cleared his throat more loudly and called to mind the purpose of this meeting.

"You could do a great deal for our Holy Church if you received preferment," he said, and saw himself at once transfixed by the other's look. "Martinus, you would make a good Bishop."

"Let every Christian himself feel his own personal certainty of salvation. Be guided by this; God comes from the inner experience of the soul, not through external ornaments and aids, and bribes."

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"Martin," cried the Cardinal in confusion and alarm, raising his hands in a gesture of defense, "you do not know mankind. It is only fear that makes them obey and submit; they are sheep that need folds and leaders and shepherds. They cannot otherwise be ruled."

"Certainly I do not know men, Herr von Greiffenklau; I see that more and more clearly every day, but I know how God may be approached and that is of greater moment. Men must guide themselves by God; they must not expect God to bow to human judgment, as they have grown used to do."

"If the Pope ruled, as you would have him rule, then there would soon be scarcely a hundred Christians."

"Are there more now?" asked Luther in much astonishment. "Do you call a man a Christian because his name is written in a church register, because he goes to Holy Mass, confesses, fasts, and receives Communion; since, if he did not, people would buy nothing from him and he could buy nothing himself, and the Pharisees would point at him in the streets."

The Cardinal got up violently. His face was blueish red; the skin was tense across his broad cheek bones. He breathed heavily and a sweat broke out all over his body.

"It is devilish hot here."

Slowly and sadly Luther got up too. When he saw before him this good-natured mass of flesh, so full of misdirected energy, in which the soul had never forced

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its way through to complete mastery, his courage almost failed him.

"No priest was able to win me for God," he said: "it was a flash of inner light that flung me to the ground so that I realized God's power and my utter helplessness. No monk's rules helped me towards God, my lord," went on Luther, "neither men of worldly learning, nor vows, nor scourgings, nor lowered eyes, but the Bible—and one single sentence of it. The sentence is, my lord, 'The just man lives by faith.'"

The Archbishop of Trier shook with fear. Was this a peasant who spoke so? If such things could come to pass in a common man, then there would be not much more peace in Germany. He answered softly:

"Doctor, I will say one thing to you: we cannot give way—we dare not."

"I know; you have no faith."

"You need not abuse us," said the Cardinal brusquely. "We cannot let the peasants and bands of robbers get the upper hand. Then all order would be destroyed—there would be murder and devastation and continual revolts and wars."

"They will be worse, and last longer, if you do not change your hearts."

With a menacing air, his hand clapped to his brawny side, where his sword commonly hung, the Cardinal glared at the monk.

"Would you support them?"

"If it be God's will, we must endure all things."

"You are mad," shouted the Cardinal, and then low-

ered his voice in alarm. "If we yielded, if we did not destroy you, a sect would soon arise that would be against all churches and would no longer know God's name."

"Would that be such an evil thing?"

"This was open war.

"Is it not better, my lord, that men should know God and serve Him, than that they should only say so and talk about their faith? Did not our Lord Jesus tell us that there must be war? Did He not say, 'The end will come, but the end is not yet'? Why would you meddle in God's business and anticipate His purpose? You should be prepared to follow Him in obedience and suffering, wherever He may bid us go. I beseech you, yield."

The Archbishop passed his hand over his neck and wiped it free of sweat.

"If you do not recant," he said hoarsely, "we must burn you." He took a short brisk step forward, seized Luther's hand and jerked his arm vigorously, as though he wanted to awaken him, or as though he were shaking a hand-bell. "Think what you are doing. You will destroy our Church."

Luther quivered and shook in that great grasp.

"No man can destroy what God will not suffer to be destroyed, and what He Himself has joined together."

"Our Church will be destroyed," repeated the Cardinal, almost shouting, "if you do not give way. Be reasonable, Martin."

"My lord," answered Luther, and freed himself gently but resolutely, "if your words express Rome's opinion, then it will soon be clear that you have long since parted from our holy faith."

"Be reasonable."

"The guilt before God's throne falls not on me. But be not so weak in faith, my lord. Believe in what you suffer to be preached: 'What God hath joined together men shall not put asunder.'"

Again! How the monk could awake dim feelings that flashed to a conclusion quicker than the brain!

"Strange doctrine!"

"All my desire, my lord, is that God's word shall be preached truly and without corruption, and that men's lives shall be ordered by it, with none to come between God's word and man."

The Cardinal again looked at Luther appraisingly.

"If our holy Curia in Rome expels your followers from the Church and excommunicates them," said he, deeply shaken, "then they will be like a branch without a tree, a branch that will be broken in pieces and burnt, or will perish of itself."

"Be not troubled," said Luther soothingly; and his adversary saw that it was not levity that made him speak so, but certainty and the sense of an inevitable order in the world; "if my doctrine is from God and I have set my hand to His work, it will abide, and if I have it not from God, it will soon perish. However it may turn, it will be to the profit of our Holy Catholic Church; otherwise God would never have allowed it

to begin, Herr von Greiffenklaus. Leave the decision to God."

The Cardinal sank his head on his breast.

And he stood so for a while.

Then he looked up again. Slowly and timidly he raised his head, and the expression in his eyes under the thatch of slightly graying hair was anxious and uncertain.

"So you would have many popes instead of one Pope. If you remove the Holy Father in Rome, every prince and every land will want to play the Pope."

"As God wills. It is promised that on the Day of Judgment all that has been put asunder shall be made one."

"Has your priesthood no other responsibility?"

"Every true believer is a priest, my lord; the faithful are themselves the Holy Church, which is not built from stone or the deeds of men that pass away. Give me your blessing, and be comforted, my lord. I may ask a blessing from every man who has even some faint vision of the good, as you have, I think, already."

Luther bowed his head towards the other. The Cardinal raised his hand, very slightly. Then he let it fall; then he raised it higher and let it fall once more. Then he abruptly laid it on Luther's tonsure and grasped the monk's head with his trembling fingers, as though to lean upon it and draw strength from it.

"May God Almighty fulfill all things to the profit of Christendom."

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"Amen," said Luther and stood aside. He raised his head.

The Cardinal seemed to want to speak again. There was something kindly in his confused expression, but he mastered the impulse.

"No Devil could stand this place," he said. "Look how I am sweating." He passed the back of his hand several times quickly across his forehead and down his chin and held out his moist hand for Luther to see; the hand shook.

He took his green Apostle's hat and put it on, saying: "It stinks of mice here."

Luther smiled as though nothing had passed between them and said: "We are both of us no more than mouse-dung, my lord."

The Cardinal put his hand out to the wall; then, with head bent and without another look at the monk, he hurried out of the lumber-room.

CHAPTER XXVI

LUTHER opened the little door and came back into the corridor. Once more he stood motionless against the pillar, amid the buzz and murmur of the now excited voices and under the impact of envious, malignant and anxious eyes.

It was very well known that he had been summoned to a preliminary hearing. They all looked at him.

"What is it?" whispered Schurff in high excitement.

Torches had been fixed in all the rings projecting from the wall and were burning smokily. There were still more people than before. The sitting of the City Envoys must have ended, as their black official robes were now present in greater numbers.

"They could not agree over Regensburg."

"The princes and the knights have joined the Bishop against the town."

"What happened?" whispered Schurff eagerly.

"What did he want of you? Tell me."

From the floor above came a group of courtiers who ran down the stairway waving their arms and shouting in all directions.

"Make room, make room," they cried. "Let us through."

"What is the matter?" shouted the multitude.

"Herr von Chièvres has had a fit." And they

plunged down the stairway two or three steps at a time.

Luther leaned against the round pillar and waited.

"What did he want?" whispered Schurff, tearing at his pointed beard. "Quick—we may be summoned at any moment. The princes are already in the Hall."

Luther looked round. Had it grown so dark meantime? Had he talked with the Archbishop so long? Through all the doors, that were continually opening and shutting on every side, shone the light of tapers.

"Speak," implored Schurff.

Tumult and hurrying footsteps—now more ominous than before; like a rush of armed men.

A cardinal, surrounded by other cardinals, shouted to Herr Trassilvanus, the Imperial Secretary and Councilor for Burgundy: "They have concealed Toledo's death from us. The Emperor had managed to put in a creature of his own."

"My Lords," said Trassilvanus, clasping and unclasping his hands with a nervous, imploring gesture, "did Herr von Chièvres tell you that?"

"Yes, with his death-rattle; from fear of going straight to hell."

The Bishop of Metz raised his crozier with its great round gilded knob, and said threateningly: "The Holy Nuncios have been betrayed; letters have been written to Rome without their knowledge."

"The Emperor shall pay for that," cried the Bishop of Verdun.

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"But, your Eminences, it was on that account that His Majesty broke with Herr von Chièvres."

"Caracciolo and Aleander have been betrayed," cried the Bishops of Lübeck and Bamberg together, "and a creature of the Emperor has been put in at Toledo."

"Peace!" shouted the Bishop of Liège warningly, with arms aloft, in a voice that rose above the rest. "The Rome appointment cannot be cancelled, but"—here he turned, and all the bishops' hats and miters swung round in quick fury towards Luther. He of Liège looked as though he could strike Luther dead with a blow—"that heretic with his beastly doctrines must die if the Emperor desires us to keep faith in him."

And with every moment their fury and their hatred grew shriller and more savage.

The Würzburger brandished his crozier and boomed out: "The Emperor must at once proclaim the monster an outlaw." The Archbishop of Bremen and the Bishop of the Levant yelled approval.

With long strides that flung out his robes, as though he were climbing a steep mountain leaning on a great staff, the Bishop of Liège moved heavily up the stairway.

The others followed.

The bishops' miters and cardinals' hats disappeared in the brightly-lit entrance to the Hall, the doors of which now stood open. The Spaniards and the monks were already out of sight—they had taken up their positions in the Hall.

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"For the Gospel's sake," stammered Schurff, "give them a soft answer; if you oppose them now they will tear you in pieces."

The Bishop of Strassburg stopped among the throng slowly mounting the stairs and turned. He had a grave, weather-beaten face, and his eyes revealed the struggle for that peace they had now found.

"You know, Brother," he said quietly and sadly, "that I wanted to reform my diocese. The See of Rome rejected all my proposals. But do not forget that there are many among us who cannot do what they would. There are many good Catholic priests who tend their flock as Christ would have had them do."

Luther answered calmly:

"That I know, my lord; and it is to help them to prevail that I am here."

"I thank you, Brother; be not afraid of those who can but kill the body."

With a sorrowful inclination of his head the Strassburger turned away, and plunged into the moving stream that engulfed him and carried him off.

"Ah," said Luther, coming forward and offering his hand heartily to one of the City Envoys, "surely it is Herr Peutinger. How is it with your wife and children?"

The Envoy from Augsburg threw a glance of alarm at Luther's genially smiling face. Before he could reply, he started back and turned. From the entrance to the Hall above them came the brazen blare of the imperial fanfare. The sound swept the stairway clear.

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With the gold Herald's staff on his shoulder, Sturm, accompanied by a few men-at-arms, came solemnly down the broad marble steps.

At a measured interval followed the Hereditary Marshal, von Pappenheim. His face was once more rosy and refreshed.

"Come, Herr Doctor," said Sturm in a half whisper.

They forced their way upwards through the lines of people who could no longer get admission to the Hall.

"You are to say nothing except in answer to the question that you will be asked," said Pappenheim in an imperious tone.

Luther, who had pulled his habit up to his knees so that he might walk more freely, gave no answer; with an outstretched hand he was making a passage for himself behind Sturm.

"Did you understand me?" asked Pappenheim imperiously.

"Certainly, my lord," answered Luther in a tone calculated to soothe the Imperial Marshal's ruffled feelings.

They had reached the entrance to the Hall. Those who stood at the door turned their faces; and a few of them contemptuously put out their tongues.

Luther entered.

The heat was terrible. The Hall was brightly lit with torches. With anxious and elaborate courtesy, as though he were afraid, Sturm cleared a way for the little group.

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The atmosphere grew more and more unbearable.

The surging throng, who had been standing on tip-toe and peering in front of them, now gave way; they were nervously careful not to come into contact with the excommunicated monk, whose head was now bent on his breast. Schurff laid his hand on his client's arm with a warning gesture.

Luther stopped.

On the other side of a narrow unoccupied space, quite near him on a raised gilded throne, sat a pale half-grown youth. He had wearily crossed his thin legs. Huge diamonds blazed on the rosettes of his small shoes. He was looking at the monk with an expression of aversion and disgust.

"Kneel down," whispered Schurff, "and put your forehead to the floor."

Luther remained upright; he turned his head and looked at his judges. A rising murmur of consternation and anger swept round the Hall: a few shouted insults which were followed by the insistent echoing clatter of the Marshal's staff, commanding silence.

Calmly Luther proceeded to take stock of that many-hued imposing assemblage. On all the electors' and princes' crowns, and on all the bishops' miters, golden crosses were conspicuous; and against the breasts of all the cardinals, archbishops, nuncios and ambassadors hung or lay gold, silver or wooden crosses.

Only a few of the company looked at Luther; most of them gazed darkly at the ground in ominous silence. It seemed as though they had all been on the point of

crying aloud, but were suddenly spellbound into immobility.

Luther observed the young Emperor. His face was bloodless and pale, and his sharp eyes were full of loathing and ill-restrained contempt. Here was the enemy. Luther tightened his leather belt and straightened his body, now weary and worn from the turmoils of a succession of excitements; he tried by a forced smile to contend against the growing dejection that threatened to paralyze him and rob him of his power of thought.

A voice suddenly became audible. Luther looked about for the speaker. The voice came from a coarse-boned personage in gorgeous apparel who was standing in front of a long table scattered with a litter of books and papers.

"Martin Luther, his Imperial Majesty has summoned you here on two grounds. First, that he may learn whether you acknowledge these books here, which were spread abroad under your name, as yours; and if so, he would hear from you whether you repudiate the contents of these books or desire to maintain them."

Luther was silent. Not a movement in the entire assemblage; and Herr von Ecken grew embarrassed at his own exaggerated vehemence.

"I would have you consider," he rapped out in a tone of injured vanity, afraid that he had said more than Aleander had permitted; however, he could not turn back now—he must go on to the end. "I would have you consider," stammered Ecken, "that in these

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books is contained much evil doctrine that might cause discontent and disorder among the people."

Glapon threw a fleeting glance at the Treasurer of Trier and imperceptibly nodded. A human soul was sacred and unconquerable. At the very outset the so carefully constructed edifice of villainy was collapsing of itself.

Luther made a great effort to steady his voice. Before he could speak, Schurff cried, undismayed:

"Let the titles of those books be read!"

The Treasurer turned in alarm and read them. He was bathed in sweat; he felt Aleander's avenging look upon him. Had Aleander not said that the books were not to be produced?

Luther saw a small Franciscan monk sitting on the carpeted steps of the Throne, looking as gentle as a child, with bent head, his elbows on his knees and his hands covering his forehead and eyes.

Was this the imperial confessor?

Schurff returned and again stood beside Luther.

"Answer!" cried the Treasurer, once more in a voice of thunder.

Then all eyes suddenly looked up.

Luther stood like a man in a stupor. He could only see the glimmer of the Emperor's face as though from afar, but through the haze of his surging blood he held Karl's eyes fast. And to them he spoke in an almost inaudible voice:

"As, touching the first question, I acknowledge the books as mine, and would deny none of them."

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And the whole company in that Hall groaned like one man. Aleander looked up imperiously at the Treasurer; his raised arm was a command.

"Do you desire," cried Ecken obediently, "to defend all the books that you have recognized as yours, or do you desire to withdraw any part of their contents?"

No one breathed.

Luther's expression betrayed utter weariness and disquiet. He was shaken by uncertainty. He raised his hand and let it fall. Then suddenly his face stiffened and he began:

"My books are not all of one sort. There are writings among them that even the Bull that condemned me recognized as profitable to the faith."

"You may only answer Yes or No," cried the Treasurer.

Murmurs of applause and indignation.

"The other books are answers forced from me by enemies."

"You must only answer Yes or No," cried the Treasurer. "Do you defend the contents of your books or do you desire to withdraw any part of them?"

Silence; the torches flickered and crackled.

"My other books are against the See of Rome which has destroyed Christianity by its doctrines and injured the bodies and souls of men."

"Yes or No," roared the Treasurer. He lost his breath and had to cough, as though some one had thrust a fist down his throat and he was choking. Luther's voice rose above the commotion and he shouted pro-

tests at the back of the Hall. With a calm proud decision, so loud that every word could be heard by every one, he said:

"As no one can deny that the consciences of Christian men have been fettered and tormented by papal ordinances and doctrines not from God, I shall not withdraw these books."

Aleander leaped to his feet; so did Caracciolo. Glapion raised his worn face; in deadly silence the Papal Nuncio ominously left the Hall.

A few bishops followed them. All the rest sat paralyzed in their seats; like faithless servants confronted by an angry master on his return.

Karl bent down to his confessor, to hide the dismay on his face; he whispered nervously:

"Such a fellow as this will not make me a heretic."

Glapion did not answer, he sat immovable; it seemed as though he did not want to hear. The Emperor looked at his confessor with a shocked expression, quickly sat up so that no one should mark his confusion, and darkly eyed the rebel who stood there pale before him. Luther's chin, neck, and mouth were tense with conscious resolve.

"You said that there were many evil doctrines in my writings that might cause discontent and disorder. To which I answer that, unlike his Imperial Majesty, I delight to hear men arguing and disputing over God's word."

At this there was a roar of protest.

All heads were turned towards the Emperor, who

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was leaning forward and staring at Luther. His lips moved. Was the monk mad? Or was it merely that he was untainted by that ingratitude and lovelessness and greed of power which had led him—the Emperor—to turn away from Chièvres in that last hour, because he thought himself so firmly set upon his throne that he now could deal with affairs of State unaided.

“Our Lord Jesus says, ‘I came to rouse a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother,’ ” went on Luther, raising his voice. “His Imperial Majesty must remember this and realize how wonderful and terrible is God in his commandments, before he does some deed that will bring a peace that is no peace, but one that will hereafter, because it ignores and condemns God’s word, unchain a torrent of intolerable wickedness. That would be an unhappy beginning for a young Emperor still inexperienced in such matters and is like to bring evil on himself and his successors.”

Shouts from the rows of electors: “Stop his filthy mouth.”

“There are warnings in many passages of Holy Writ showing that kings do more especially bring ruin on themselves and their families if they think to make their realms happy or establish them in safety by cleverness and cunning. For God cuts off the wise man in his cleverness before he is aware. Remember that in your youth, your Majesty, and most High Lords, for your own sakes and beware.”

Karl’s lips trembled, so that his mouth stood agape. With shining eyes, as though he would leap up and run

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to his aid, Glapion looked at the youth; and that youth's heart was changing.

"Because I may not lend support to a Godless tyranny," said Luther, "I cannot withdraw, I will not withdraw, what I have said and written."

The silence was complete.

All looked at the Emperor to see whether he was minded to listen any further. Karl leaned forward more deeply than before; then judgment fell.

"Only one man can stand so alone, so utterly alone, with only his conscience for comrade in a world that hates him, ready to endure or fall—only a man who seeks nothing for himself, who has rid himself of selfishness, and pomp, and power, and all deceit, and craves nothing but the truth."

Through Glapion's head flashed the phrase, What is truth? Thus had Pontius Pilate answered the Savior when He stood before the Tables of the Law.

Here once more was truth; a man with all his limitations, a true man, that was truth.

Truth means an unending fight with all authority, with all the powers of the earth—it can never bring peace or earthly power.

And thus it was, thus it had been, and thus it always would be even unto the end of the world. For men desired power and safety, to deaden their more burning desire for higher things. If a man stands out against the madness of his fellows, they turn against him and destroy him in cowardly despair because they cannot follow him. But then the darkness is lit up from

within, because men only learn to love light when it has departed from them; light shines in that darkness and flings its long flickering gleam far out across the earth; until darkness comes again, and a new prophet.

"But the light that I shall now kindle for you"—in Christ's own words, that all may read, the light for which Luther fought—"shall shine upon you from the going up of the sun until its going down; it shall be always with you, and if ye hide it away, the reflection of it shall shine within your hearts. The unrest within you is your craving to return unto the Father."

He who stood here as a heretic had understood Christ. He said no more than what the noblest spirits of all times and peoples had shown, through life and suffering, to be the aim of existence.

Glapon sat erect on the steps of the imperial throne; his eyes glowed and flashed as they swept over the crowded Hall. The Treasurer must have answered, as Luther was again replying.

"When our Lord Jesus was condemned before the High Priests' Court, he said: 'If I have spoken evil bear witness of the evil.' If our Lord was ready to let a slave bear witness against Him, I, a humble erring preacher, most certainly desire that my error should be made clear."

Luther looked about him with an inquiring glance in his fiery eyes. Glapon gazed at all the faces in that company. They were the faces of perplexed, diffident, dejected, feeble men.

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"I am truly ready to withdraw any doctrine which can be shown, by God's word, to be false."

"That can never be," cried Glapion, who then shrank back and hid his head from the reproving glances of the Emperor and princes.

In despair, the Treasurer of Trier thundered out the conclusion of his speech; at the back of the Hall there was already uproar and commotion.

"On you, Martin Luther, lies the guilt of schism and bloodshed. Heed not your conscience—you must not, for your conscience errs. If you recant the Emperor will be merciful. Your errors, madman, are the errors of all heretics which our Holy Church has many times rejected and condemned."

And Luther nodded approvingly.

The assemblage half rose in their seats.

Glapion sat motionless like a sepulchral image on the new grave of the moldering, ever fruitless human hope of fellowship, justice and happiness.

"Give a clear answer that all may understand."

Glapion raised his head and stared at Luther with great burning eyes. Luther's brow seemed to stiffen and grow dark, then it unclouded once again; there was defiance in his eyes as he cried to all that company:

"Does no man challenge me? Then I bow to God's word alone, as I understand it, and my conscience is in His keeping. I cannot, and I will not, act against it."

Many of the princes rose.

"You have not answered," shouted the Treasurer in despair. "The judgments of the Pope and the Councils

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cannot here be called in question, or certainly could not exist. The Councils and the Pope have already condemned you. Think you that the Pope and the Councils can err?"

"Yes; and I can prove it."

Then the tumult broke loose into an outburst of wild shouts and cries. The Emperor got up.

"That you cannot prove," roared Ecken.

"I can."

"Enough."

The Emperor left the Hall.

Luther turned. Through a storm of insults and applause he strode to the door from which had burst forth the mighty judgment of that hour, which was now to range over the world and time to come.

Glapion stood alone.

He saw the future; battles, wars and strife between all ranks and peoples; cruelty, tyranny, bestiality, bloodshed, lust of power—more vile than ever, since now, at least, its pretext was God's service; and following upon all this turmoil, the inevitable ruin, in time to come, of the temporal power of Rome, who must thus find her way back to the Spirit, if her doctrine was not to pass away.

The work for humanity had been accomplished. Men could again become what men once had been—free, and rejoicing in their strength upon the earth for which they had been born: and not in Germany alone.

Schism, hatred of all creeds, war, executions, murder, oppression, and confusion, and then—despair, ruin

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upon ruin, and the loss of inner light; yet what men have rejected will once more make them one and bring them closer and nearer to each other than ever yet before. God at last, in true community, beyond all cleavages of race and interest, shall find and possess His people, now truly one, as when the sun was rising on the world: "As it was in the beginning."

The work of a chosen instrument of God was launched, and moving ceaselessly onward to that far-off fulfillment for which all good men yearn.

The little Franciscan trembled as he looked in joyful reverence at the Crucifix on the wall behind the empty imperial daïs.

"IT IS FINISHED" was written beneath the image of the crucified Savior.

Once more the great fight had been fought against sloth, degradation, and power, against the extinction of the divine fire in every human breast; and that fight had once more been won.

How long would the victory endure?

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